

NOW I LAY ME  
DOWN TO SLEEP.



THE · P.RAYER  
OF · CHILDHOOD



IN · LITERATURE · AND · SONG



BY

WM OLAND BOURNE

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NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP

THE PRAYER OF CHILDHOOD

IN

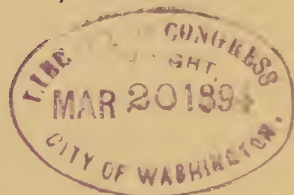
LITERATURE AND SONG

BY

WM. OLAND BOURNE

NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION

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PRESS OF  
EDWARD O. JENKINS' SON,  
NEW YORK.

TO  
THE UNKNOWN AUTHOR  
OF THE  
PRAYER OF CHILDHOOD.

---

NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP,  
I PRAY THE LORD MY SOUL TO KEEP;  
IF I SHOULD DIE BEFORE I WAKE,  
I PRAY THE LORD MY SOUL TO TAKE.

---

A MILLION TONGUES HAVE LISPED THE HOLY STRAIN,  
UNCOUNTED VOICES BREATHED THE SACRED PSALM;  
AND LOW SWEET WHISPERS O'ER THE BED OF PAIN  
HAVE MADE THE PATRIARCH A CHILD AGAIN,  
TO PASS FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN'S ETERNAL CALM.

---

TELL YE YOUR CHILDREN OF IT,  
AND  
LET YOUR CHILDREN TELL THEIR CHILDREN,  
AND  
THEIR CHILDREN ANOTHER GENERATION.

JOEL i. 3.

W. O. B.





## P R E F A C E .

**F**LOATING on the sea of newspaper literature, like the little mariner that spreads his sail to the breeze, in the sunlight, and then folds it up and drops out of sight, to re-appear in another clime, and to other eyes, there comes to the hands of the compiler, the following tribute to the author of the "Universal Prayer" of Childhood. It is as graceful as it is true, and every reader will respond to the sentiment, that

"The man who wrote the four simple lines, beginning with '*Now I lay me down to sleep,*' seemed to do a very little thing. He wrote four lines for his little child. His name has not come down to us; but he has done more for the good of his race than if he had commanded the victorious army at Waterloo. The little fires which the good man kindles here and there on the shores never go out, but ever and anon they flame up and throw light on the pilgrim's path."—REV. DR. DODD.

For many years, among other gleanings from the current literature of the press, the compiler has preserved poems and incidents relating to the sweet and simple prayer of

infancy, and they are collected in these pages, believing that they will be of interest to readers of every age.

Subsequent to the publication of the first editions in another form, a number of contributions have been received from various sources, and those deemed most appropriate and worthy of preservation are collected in the present volume.

The compiler takes great pleasure in acknowledging the labors of Rev. H. HARBAUGH, D.D., editor of *The Guardian*, a monthly magazine, published for years at Chambersburg, Pa., who gave special attention to the Children's Prayer, and presented the results of his own work, and that of his correspondents, in successive issues of that periodical. In the introductory to the series (August, 1863), he states the origin of the effort, as follows :

"Several years ago, while on a summer vacation tour, we had the pleasure of spending a delightful day with a company of literary and intelligent Christian friends, at a lovely rural country seat some miles out from one of our principal cities. Seated in a group, under the shade of a venerable elm in the lawn, the matter of hymns, their authors, and incidents connected with them, came up in the conversation. Each one contributed to the general fund of interesting information, which enlivened the occasion and made it mutually instructive.

"Suddenly, but very naturally, the conversation turned to

the little prayer, 'Now I lay me down to sleep.' A number of pleasant memories connected with it were called up, and many interesting incidents to which it had given rise were related. At length it was suggested that it would be a good idea to write the history of this little prayer, embodying an account of the many witnesses in which lasting impressions for good had been made by it, and publish it as a Sunday-school book.

"'Good! good!' was the response, which came with true heartiness from the whole company. 'Let it be done!'"

Dr. HARBAUGH was selected as the chairman of "the committee," but events proved that the work fell very naturally into his own hands, and *The Guardian*, at intervals for several successive years, became the repository of the poems, incidents, and tributes collected by the editor. These have been freely drawn upon in the preparation of this volume. Dr. HARBAUGH was a minister of the German Reformed Church, and was called to a Professor's chair in the Mercersburgh Theological Seminary (now at Lancaster, Pa.), which he occupied several years, when he laid down to sleep in the hope of a blessed immortality, December 28, 1867, at the early age of fifty-three. Among his published works are a volume of poems in English, and one in Pennsylvania German.

The compiler acknowledges also the extremely kind attention and interest shown in this work by Rev. MATTHIAS

SHEELEIGH, of Fort Washington, Pa., editor of the *Sunday School Herald*, and pastor of the Lutheran church at White-marsh, who has furnished valuable information relating to the authorship of some of the articles, as well as their origin. His own poetical contributions will be studied with interest, as ingenious and appropriate elaborations of the text of the prayer.

Acknowledgments are also made to OLIVER DITSON & Co., of Boston; BIGLOW & MAIN, W. A. POND & Co., and LESLIE'S *Sunday Magazine*, of New York; J. W. SMITH, Jr., & BRO., and GEORGE HENRY CURTIS, Esq., Brooklyn; and J. M. STODDART & Co., Philadelphia, for the generous contributions of their respective songs and hymns.

Musical readers will be interested in the three different versions and compositions of "The Unfinished Prayer," the melodies alone of which are given to illustrate the text.

Many of the incidents have been contributed to this volume, and are now first presented to the public.

In the belief that this harvesting of the golden grain of moral and religious experience in early and in matured years will not be in vain, the work is committed to the press.

W. O. B.

NOTE.—The compiler will be indebted for reliable information in regard to the authorship and time of publication of any of the selections not credited to their respective authors, and for any other facts of interest appropriate to the topic of this volume.



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“AND childhood had its litanies  
In every age and clime ;  
The earliest cradles of the race  
Were rocked to poet's rhyme.

. . . . .

“And haply, pleading long with him,  
For sin-sick hearts and cold,  
The angels of our childhood still  
The Father's face behold.”

WHITTIER.



## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

“ **N**OW I lay me down to sleep ! ”  
First beside my mother kneeling ;  
Through the hushed-up silence deep,  
Hear the double whisper stealing,  
“ If I die before I wake,  
Pray the Lord my soul to take.”

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,”  
And the angels o’er me bending,  
Sent by God my soul to keep,  
Through the purple light descending,  
Wide-arched wings above me spread,  
Heavenly shelter round my head.

“ Now I lay me down to sleep ! ”  
No wild dreams could break that slumber—  
I had prayed for God to keep—  
Blessed visions without number ;  
Glory caught from heavenly things,  
Showered from those angel wings !

“ Now I lay me down to sleep ! ”

Had I died before the waking,  
I had never learned to keep  
Memories of a life's heart-breaking ;  
From the Future and the Past,  
God had caught me up at last.

“ Now I lay me down to sleep ! ”

Ah ! the angels cease their keeping  
Watch above the haunted dreams,  
When the prayerless man is sleeping—  
Where such feverish visions burn,  
Back the sorrowing watchers turn !

“ Now I lay me down to sleep ! ”

Oh ! my God, when I am dying,  
Hear me pray that old-time prayer,  
On my haunted death-bed lying,  
From the old dreams let me wake—  
“ Pray the Lord my soul to take ! ”

## TEACHING.

**I**T is said of that good old man, JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, that he never went to his rest at night until he had repeated the simple prayer learned in childhood—the familiar “Now I lay me down to sleep.”

Is there not something inexpressibly touching in the thought that these words, breathed by the rosy lips of infancy, went with him away down through old age into the dark valley of death? Some people object to teaching children forms of prayer, lest the act only becomes a form. But did not Christ teach us to say “Our Father”?

Do you not remember those still evening hours far back in your childhood, when your mother first taught you to say those words? Can you forget the solemn hush that fell on everything as she knelt with you and commended you to the care of the blessed Father?

She is dead now; but ever as the night falls you think of her and the little sister she left in your care—how it

fell to you to hear the little one repeat the same old words in the dim twilight, and how, at last, when she had learned to love the Saviour, who watches over the little children, He called her suddenly one day to go up where they sing the new song.

Oh, teach the children, the little children, to pray!

Years of sin may come, but the memory of those early prayers may yet soften the heart, and prepare the way for better things. Or, never neglected, this habit may grow with their growth, strengthen with their strength, become a strong shield against the temptations of life, and through faith at last free immortal souls from earthly sin. So let us teach the children, the little children, to pray.

---

The statement made by the Editor of the *Boston Recorder*, relative to President ADAMS, has the sanction of his own high authority. During the delivery of a lecture in the Broadway Tabernacle, in the city of New York, in speaking of the moral power of early maternal training, he referred to the influence of a mother's piety, and stated that the little prayer he had learned at her knee were the last words always uttered by his lips be-



fore he went to sleep. "When his eyes were about to close for the long sleep of death, by his request this verse was repeated, that thus simply, but sublimely, he might once more leave his spirit in his Father's keeping."

Prof. W. S. TYLER, of Amherst College, says: "While 'Now I lay me down to sleep' is a prayer expressly for children, it has a place in the memory and conscience, if it does not dwell also in the heart and on the lips of almost every adult in a Christian land."

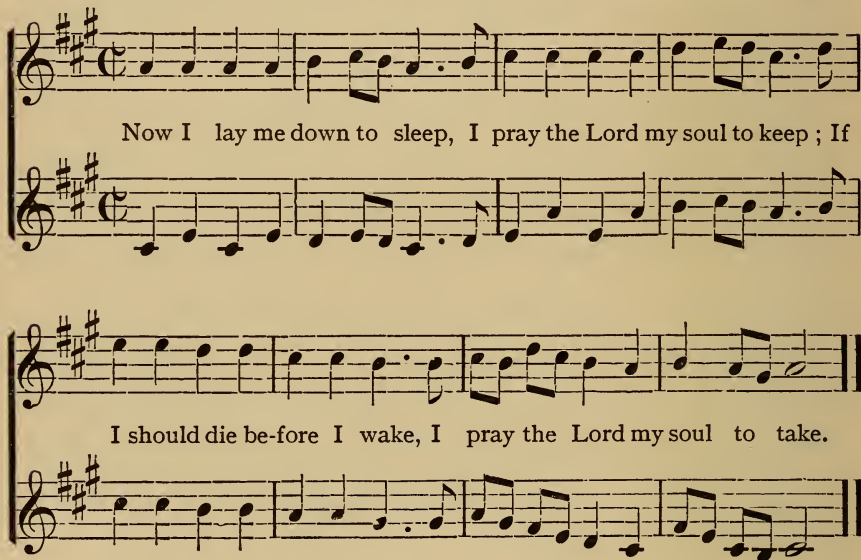
Rev. JOHN TODD, of Pittsfield, Mass., wrote: "I do not believe there are four lines in the English language, not inspired, which have had so much influence in forming human character, as the lines commencing, 'Now I lay me down to sleep.'"

An unknown writer has said: "This sweet verse has for two centuries been the silent censer in which the evening incense of childhood has been offered to God, associated with the golden censer, whose workmanship is divine, 'Our Father who art in Heaven.' He who wrote this, with its simple beauty, did not live in vain. The world knows not his name, but it blesses his memory."

## “NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.”

FROM “THE MOTHER’S NURSERY SONGS.”

THOMAS HASTINGS. 1835.



The musical notation is written on two systems, each with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is common time (C). The melody is simple and gentle, with a mix of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep ; If

I should die be-fore I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.

### AT NIGHT.

Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

### IN THE MORNING.

Through the night, with slumber pressed,  
The Lord hath giv'n me quiet rest ;  
Let mercy guide me through the day,  
And lead me in the narrow way.

## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

**I**N the quiet nursery chambers,  
Snowy pillows yet unpressed,  
See the forms of little children  
Kneeling, white-robed for their rest,  
All in quiet nursery chambers,  
While the dusky shadows creep,  
Hear the voices of the children—  
“Now I lay me down to sleep.”

In the meadow and the mountain,  
Calmly shine the winter stars,  
But across the glistening lowlands,  
Slant the moonlight's silver bars.  
In the silence and the darkness,  
Darkness growing still more deep,  
Listen to the little children  
Praying God their souls to keep.

“ If we die ”—so pray the children,  
And the mother’s head drops low ;  
(One from out her fold is sleeping  
Deep beneath the winter’s snow ;)   
“ Take our souls ”; and past the casement  
Flits a gleam of crystal light,  
Like the trailing of his garments,  
Walking evermore in light.

Little souls that stand expectant,  
Listen at the gates of life ;  
Hearing, far away, the murmur  
Of the tumult and the strife.  
We, who fight beneath those banners,  
Meeting ranks of foemen there,  
Find a deeper, broader meaning  
In your simple vesper prayer.

When your hands shall grasp this standard  
Which to-day you watch from far,  
When your deeds shall shape the conflict  
In this universal war,  
Pray to Him, the God of battles,  
Whose strong eye can never sleep,  
In the warring of temptation,  
Firm and true your souls to keep.

When the combat ends, and slowly  
Clears the smoke from out the skies,  
Then far down the purple distance,  
All the noise of battle dies ;  
When the last night's solemn shadows  
Settle down on you and me,  
May the love that never faileth  
Take our souls eternally.

## GENERAL HUGH BRADY.

**G**EN. HUGH BRADY, well known as one of the most meritorious officers of the United States army, died some years ago in Detroit, Michigan. Before his death he was severely injured by being thrown from a carriage ; and when his physician told him he could not recover, with that calm self-possession so indicative of true courage, he replied : “ *Let the drums beat, my knapsack is slung.*”

As the General sank under disease, he became partially unconscious, and his mind wandered back to the scenes of his active life. He was again an officer high in command, marshaling his army on the battle-field ; then a subaltern, obeying the orders of his superior ; again a school-boy conning over his lessons ; and finally a child at his mother’s knee ; until, as the night of death closed around him forever, he murmured :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”



## EBEN MERRIAM.

**T**HE readers of the daily journals of New York and Brooklyn, for nearly twenty-five years, were familiar with the initials "E. M.," appended to frequent contributions relative to meteorological observations, incidents of natural history, and numerous facts of scientific interest. Their author, Mr. MERRIAM, toward the close of his life, was afflicted with a disorder which at times gave him great uneasiness. During these seasons of depression, when all other efforts failed to fix his mind in his devotions, and his power of expression was almost lost, his whole heart, as he afterward told a friend, found comfort and peace in the prayer first learned in the days of his infancy. The creed and prayer of childhood were renewed in the child-like faith and trust in which he laid down in the sleep which was to him a glorious waking to an unclouded life.

## THE UNFINISHED PRAYER.

“**N**OW I lay me”—say it, darling ;  
“ Lay me,” lisped the tiny lips  
Of my daughter, kneeling, bending  
O’er her folded finger tips.

“ Down to sleep ”—“ to sleep,” she murmured,  
And the curly head drooped low ;  
“ I pray the Lord,” I gently added ;  
“ You can say it all, I know.”

“ Pray the Lord ”—the words came faintly ;  
Fainter still, “ My soul to keep ” ;  
Then the tired head fairly nodded,  
And the child was fast asleep.

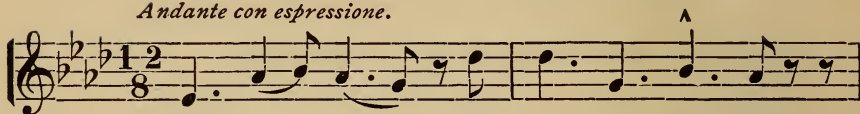
But the dewy eyes half opened  
When I clasped her to my breast,  
And the dear voice softly whispered,  
“ Mamma, God knows all the rest.”

Oh, the trusting, sweet confiding  
Of the child heart ! Would that I  
Thus might trust my Heavenly Father,  
He who hears my feeblest cry.

# THE UNFINISHED PRAYER.

Stray Words rendered in Music by HORATIO D. HEWITT.

*Andante con espressione.*



1. "Now I.... lay," re - peat it, dar - ling ;



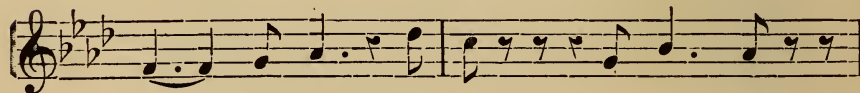
"Lay me," lisped the ti - ny.... lips



Of my... daugh - ter, kneel - ing, bend - ing



O'er her fold - ed fin - ger tips ;



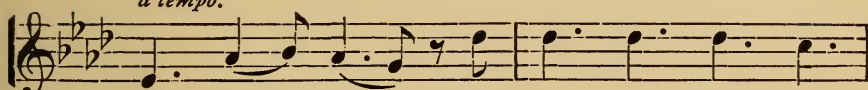
"Down to sleep," "to sleep," she mur - mur'd,



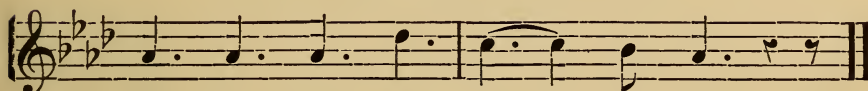
And the curl - y head droop'd low ;.... "I

Used by permission of the Publishers. Song and Accompaniment published by  
J. W. SMITH, JR., & BRO., Brooklyn, N. Y.

*a tempo.*

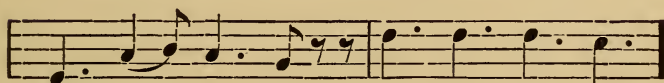


pray the... Lord," I gen - tly add - ed,



You can say it all,..... I know.

"Pray the Lord," the words came faintly,  
 Fainter still "my soul to keep ;"  
 Then the tired head fairly nodded,  
 And the child was fast asleep.  
 But the dewy eyes half opened,  
 When I clasped her to my breast ;



And the dear voice soft - ly whispered,  
 "Mamma, God knows all the rest."

## THE DYING SOLDIER.

**A** FEW weeks ago, in the hospital at Camp Stoneman, a soldier lay in the morning light, with the unmistakable signs of hastening death upon his face. The Rev. Mr. C. saw the change, and proposed reading from the Holy Bible and prayer, as the most fitting and mildest intimation to the dying young man of the approach of the "inevitable hour." He promptly assented, and when, upon rising from his knees, the chaplain sang, "There is a fountain filled with blood," the soldier joined in the praise. The same faint voice united in singing afterward "Rock of Ages." As the day declined he expressed his trust in Jesus, and his thoughts went back to his early home and mother's knee.

While the pulse grew feeble, reason remained clear. Closing his eyes, he seemed again kneeling by her whose name never loses its music to the ear of the expiring son. With low tones he said :



“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
And if I die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

The attendant went to the soldier's side, but he was just gone in “ the long sleep that knows no waking.” The touching lessons of such a history are too apparent to need a mention ; adding another to the many hallowed scenes behind the crimson curtain of war, whose story is fragrant with the memories of a Christian home.

## FALLING ASLEEP.

**G**OLDEN head so lowly bending,  
Little feet so white and bare,  
Dewy eyes half shut, half opened,  
Lisping out her evening prayer.

Well she knows when she is saying,  
“Now I lay me down to sleep,”  
’Tis to God that she is praying,  
Praying Him her soul to keep.

Half asleep, and murmuring faintly,  
“If I should die before I wake”—  
Tiny fingers clasped so saintly—  
“I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

Oh, the rapture, sweet, unbroken,  
Of the soul who wrote that prayer!  
Children’s myriad voices floating  
Up to heaven, record it there.

If, of all that has been written,  
I could choose what might be mine,  
It should be that child's petition,  
Rising to the throne divine.

## PATTIE'S LAST PRAYER.

**A** BEAUTIFUL little bright-eyed girl was lying upon her bed, rapidly wasting away. It was evident she would not last long unless there were some sudden and unexpected change. For several days she had been apparently unconscious, and was growing worse and worse.

She had been a child of prayer, and her lips had been taught to breathe, nightly, an offering to the children's Friend. The rosy cheek had turned pale, the little form was a mere skeleton, and her hands had become as white as the sheet.

A mother sat by her, watching the pale and silent sufferer. It seemed as though God had already come and closed her little eyes and shut out the world, that she might sleep her last sleep and awake refreshed in heaven.

All at once she opened that soft blue eye, so long

closed, looked into her mother's face with a sweet, confiding look, and said :

“ Ma, ma ! I forgot to say my prayers.”

Summoning what strength she had left, she clasped her little white fingers together and audibly repeated her evening prayer :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

The prayer finished, she never spoke again. Jesus heard those sweet words, and the little sufferer went where pain and death are no more. So died Pattie Buford, only daughter of Major-General John Buford, U. S. A.

The last sigh of earth was “ mother ! ” the next word was “ Jesus ! ” The last words she ever uttered were a prayer ; the next a song of praise in heaven.

## LITTLE ROSEBUD.

**R**OSEBUD lay in her trundle-bed,  
With her small hands folded above her head,  
And fixed her innocent eyes on me,  
While a thoughtful shadow came over their glee.  
“Mamma,” said she, “when I go to sleep,  
I pray to the Father my soul to keep;  
And He comes and carries it far away  
To the beautiful home where His angels stay.  
I gather red roses and lilies so white;  
I sing with the angels through all the long night;  
And when, in the morning, I awake from my sleep,  
He gives back the soul I gave Him to keep,  
And I only remember, like beautiful dreams,  
The garlands of lilies, the wonderful streams.”



## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

**T**HERE are probably no four lines in the English language that are repeated so many times daily as the following :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

And it is not only children and youth that repeat them. Many whose heads are “silvered over with age” have been accustomed to repeat them as their last prayer before closing their eyes in sleep, every night since they were taught them in infancy. One of the most distinguished Presidents of the United States was among that number. A Bishop of the Methodist Church, in addressing a Sabbath-school, told the children that he had been accustomed to say that

prayer every night since his mother taught it to him when he was a little boy.

In conversing recently with a ship-master, over seventy years of age, and who has been for many years a deacon in the Church, he said that when he followed the seas, and even before he indulged a hope that he was a Christian, he never lay down in his berth at night without saying with great seriousness, and, he thought, sincerity,

“ Now I lay me down to sleep.”

He felt so strongly his need of religion, and his danger without it, that he used always to read his Bible, and place that precious book under his pillow at night, and often to kiss the sacred volume, trusting, no doubt, in this reverence for the word of God, instead of trusting alone in the Saviour.

Let every reader learn, and every night repeat that little prayer—

“ Now I lay me down to sleep.”

## WILLIE'S PRAYER.

**I**N the pleasant nursery, bright  
With the wood fire's dancing light,  
Full of fun, with many a shout,  
White-robed children run about.

Now the bed-time frolic past,  
Mother's voice calls them at last :  
Come, my darlings ; come and pray  
For God's blessing, night and day."

Then they kneel, with fair heads bowed,  
And together pray aloud—  
"Our Father," and again,  
"Now I lay me." Silence then,  
Like a halo, seems to fall  
On the bended heads of all.  
For mamma said God would hear  
What they whispered in His ear.

So their childish wishes sweet  
Silently their hearts repeat.

Now are raised two curly heads :—  
“Tum and tiss us in our beds”—  
“Tuck us up, please, mamma dear,”  
Pleads one darling in her ear.  
Mother’s good-night kiss, caressing,  
Is to them like heaven’s blessing.

Only Willie lingers where  
They all knelt by mamma’s chair ;  
Puzzled, troubled with the doubt  
Whether he should ask right out  
For one thing he wanted so.  
Mother said that God would know  
What was bad, and that He would  
Only give us what was good.  
So—“Please, God, to give to me  
All the good things that would be—  
Good things that are good for me !”

Oh, the truth and wisdom rare  
Of the boy’s true-hearted prayer !

I, with all my added years,  
Sad to-night with many fears,  
Would be happier if I should  
Change my prayer for doubtful good,—  
Leaving to my Father's ken  
What to give, and how and when ;  
Glad to have Him always know  
What things I have wanted so,  
And to let His love decide  
What good things must be denied  
To me now.—For peace and strife,  
Loss, possession, death, and life,  
Present things, and things to come—  
(Safely kept for me at home)  
All are mine, and God will make  
“Good for me” for Jesus' sake.

So to-night my heart has caught  
Blessing from the child's sweet thought,  
And to rest, untroubled, deep,  
Now I lay me down to sleep.

# "NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP."

Music by G. H. CURTIS. 1881.

*Tenderly. p*

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the

The first system of musical notation is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. It consists of a treble and bass staff. The melody is in the treble staff, starting on a whole note G4, followed by a half note A4-Bb4, and then a quarter note C5. The bass staff provides harmonic support with chords. The lyrics 'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the' are written below the treble staff.

Lord my soul to keep; If I should die be -

The second system of musical notation continues the melody and bass line. The lyrics 'Lord my soul to keep; If I should die be -' are written below the treble staff.

fore I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.

The third system of musical notation concludes the piece with a final cadence. The lyrics 'fore I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.' are written below the treble staff.



## THE SOLDIER'S PRAYER.

**I**T was the evening after a great battle. All day long the din of strife had echoed far, and thickly strewn lay the shattered forms of those so lately erect and exultant in the flush and strength of manhood. Among the many who bowed to the conqueror Death that night was a youth in the first freshness of mature life. The strong limbs lay listless, and the dark hair was matted with gore on the pale broad forehead. His eyes were closed. As one who ministered to the sufferer bent over him, he at first thought him dead; but the white lips moved, and slowly, in weak tones, he repeated:

“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take;  
And this I ask for Jesus' sake.”

As he finished he opened his eyes, and meeting the pitying gaze of a brother soldier, he exclaimed: "My mother taught me that when I was a little boy, and I have said it every night since I can remember. Before the morning dawns, I believe God will take my soul for Jesus' sake; but before I bid—I want to send a message to my mother."

He was carried to a temporary hospital, and a letter was written to his mother which he dictated, full of Christian faith and filial love. He was calm and peaceful. Just as the sun arose his spirit went home, his last articulate words being—

"I pray the Lord my soul to take;  
And this I ask for Jesus' sake."

So died William B., of the Massachusetts volunteers. The prayer of childhood was the prayer of manhood. He learned it at his mother's knee in his distant northern home, and he whispered it in dying, when his young life ebbed away on a southern battle-field. It was his nightly petition in life, and the angel who bore his spirit home to heaven, bore the sweet prayer his soul loved so well.

God bless the saintly words, alike loved and repeated by high and low, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, old and young; only second to our Lord's prayer in beauty and simplicity. Happy the soul that can repeat it with the holy fervor of our dying soldier.

## LITTLE LUTHER'S PRAYER.

“**M**RS. ROSS, may Luther go home with me and stay to-night?” said little Alice Bell to the minister’s wife, who was visiting, with her husband and children, among the members of his congregation.

The family, of which Alice was the youngest, made no profession of religion. Mr. Bell was a good man in his way—that is, he was honest and kind ; but he had never become a child of God.

Luther went home with Alice, and a pleasant romp they had. At last, the children’s bed-time came. Now, Luther had been taught to kneel down by his papa’s knee, and to repeat his prayer before going to bed. So the artless child, in the absence of his parents, walked confidently up to Mr. Bell and knelt down, folded his little hands, and in a clear voice repeated :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;

If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take;  
And this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen."

So quietly did the child act, that the old man was not aware of his intention until saying "Amen." He arose, and going to each, he kissed them good-night.

Little Alice stood in childish astonishment, wondering what the strange proceeding meant.

When the children were asleep, the family sat long and thoughtfully; each seemed to be pursuing an absorbing train of thought. At length Mrs. Bell broke the silence, as a tear sparkled on her cheek, saying: "What a sweet child!"

Mr. Bell took no part in the conversation thus started, but leaving his family circle, retired to his bedroom.

He passed a restless night, and to the oft-repeated question of his wife, "if he were ill?" he only replied "No."

Morning came, and while breakfast was being prepared, the children, and their playfulness, seemed to drive away the singular gloom of kind Mr. Bell. The chairs were placed, and they sat down to breakfast.

Luther, wondering why they did not have worship, looked from one to the other as they began to eat without the "grace" they always had at home. Thinking, no doubt, that they forgot, he turned his eyes to Mr. Bell and said, almost in a whisper, "We didn't pray." It was too much. The old man left the table. Going into his room, he fell upon his knees and wept and prayed.

Mr. Bell and most of his family now stand at the Lord's table with their neighbors, showing how God, "out of the mouth of lambs and sucklings" hath perfected praise. Luther did what many sermons and exhortations failed to do; and now he and Alice may both repeat their little prayers by Mr. Bell's knee, while, with his hands upon their heads, he smiles and echoes heartily the amen, and the family altar is erected and loved.

"Feed my lambs," said Christ, and sometimes the tender lamb may lead the straying sheep into the fold.



“NOW I LAY ME.”

**T**HE dreamy night draws nigh,  
Soft delicious airs breathe of mingled flowers,  
And on the wings of slumber creep the hours.  
The moon is high;  
See yonder tiny cot,  
The lattice decked with vines—a tremulous ray  
Steals out to where the silver moonbeams lay,  
Yet pales them not!  
Within, two holy eyes,  
Two little hands clasped softly, and a brow  
Where thought sits busy, weaving garlands now  
Of joys and sighs  
For the swift-coming years.  
Two rosy lips with innocent worship part;  
List! be thou saint—or skeptic, if thou art,  
Thou must have ears:  
“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;

If I should die before<sup>o</sup>I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

Doth it not noiseless ope  
The very floodgates of thy heart, and make  
A better man of thee for her sweet sake,  
Who, with strong hope,  
Her sweet task ne'er forgot  
To whisper "Now I lay me," o'er and o'er?  
And thou didst kneel upon the sanded floor—  
Forget them not!

From many a festive hall  
Where flashing light and flashing glances vie,  
And robed in splendor, mirth makes revelry—  
Soft voices call  
On the light-hearted throngs  
To sweep the harp strings, and to join the dance.  
The careless girl starts lightly, as perchance,  
Amid the songs,  
The merry laugh, the jest,  
Come to her vision songs of long ago,  
When by her snowy couch she murmured low,  
Before her rest,  
That single infant's prayer.  
Once more at home, she lays her jewels by,

Throws back the curls that shade her heavy eye,  
And kneeling there,  
With quivering lip and sigh,  
Takes from her fingers white the sparkling rings,  
The golden coronet from her brow, and flings  
The baubles by;  
Nor doth she thoughtless dare  
To seek her rest, till she hath asked of Heaven  
That all her sins through Christ may be forgiven.  
Then comes the prayer:

“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

The warrior on the field,  
After the battle, pillowing his head  
Perhaps upon a fallen comrade dead,  
Scorns not to yield  
To the sweet memories of his childhood's hour,  
When fame was bartered for the crimson flower.

The statesman gray,  
His massive brow all hung with laurel leaves,  
Forgets his honors while his memory weaves  
A picture of that home, 'mid woods and streams,

Where hoary mountains caught the sun's first beams,  
A cabin rude—the wide fields glistening,  
The cattle yoked, and mutely listening;  
The farmer's toil, the farmer's fare, and best  
Of earthly luxuries, the farmer's rest.

But hark! a soft voice steals upon his heart:

“Now say your prayer, my son, before we part;  
And clasping his great hands—a child once more,  
Upon his breast, forgetting life's long war—

Thus hear him pray:

“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

“**N**OW I lay me down to sleep,”  
And the blue eyes, dark and deep,  
Let their snowy curtains down,  
Edged with fringes golden brown.  
“All day long the angels fair,  
I’ve been watching over there ;  
Heav’n’s not far, ’tis just in sight,  
Now they’re calling me, good-night !  
Kiss me, mother, do not weep,  
Now I lay me down to sleep.”

*Chorus*—Over there, just over there,  
I shall say my morning prayer ;  
Kiss me, mother, do not weep,  
“Now I lay me down to sleep.”

Tangled ringlets, all smooth now,  
Looped back from the waxen brow ;

Little hands so dimpled, white,  
Clasped together cold to-night.  
Where the mossy, daisied sod,  
Brought sweet messages from God,  
Two pale lips with kisses pressed,  
There we left her to her rest,  
And the dews of evening weep  
Where we laid her down to sleep.

*Chorus*—Over there, just over there,  
List the angel's morning prayer ;  
Lispings low through fancy creep,  
“ Now I lay me down to sleep ! ”

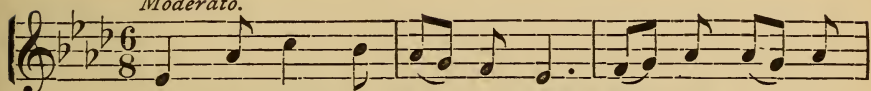


# "NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP."

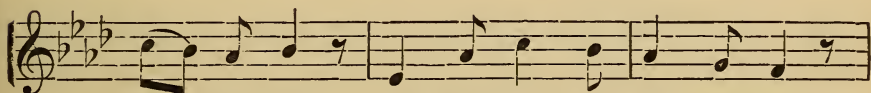
Words by Miss HATTIE A. FOX.

Music by ARTHUR D. WALBRIDGE.

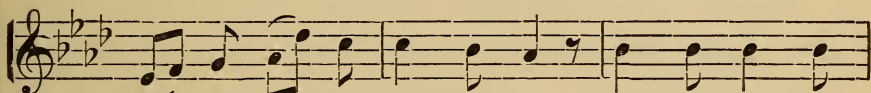
*Moderato.*



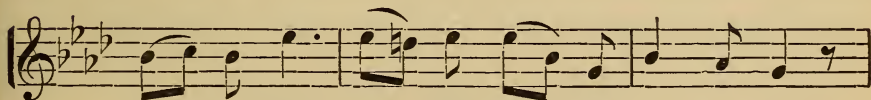
1. "Now I lay me down to sleep," And the blue eyes,
2. Tan - gled ring - lets, all smooth now, Looped back from the



dark and deep, Let their snow - y cur - tains down,  
wax - en brow; Lit - tle hands so dim - pled, white,



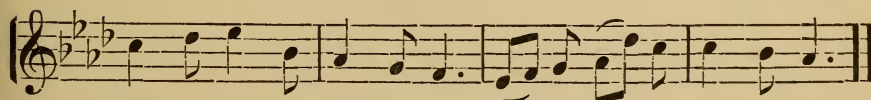
Edged with frin - ges gold - en brown. "All day long, the  
Clasp'd to - geth - er cold to - night. Where the mos - sy,



an - gels fair, I've been watch - ing o - ver there;  
dais - ied sod, Brought sweet mes - sa - ges from God,



Heaven's not far, 'tis just in sight, Now they're calling me, good night;  
Two pale lips with kiss-es press'd, There we left her to her rest;



Kiss me, mother, do not weep, Now I lay me down to sleep."  
And the dews of evening weep, Where we laid her down to sleep.

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## ENTERING THE SHADOWS.

A BEAUTIFUL incident is recorded of a little girl who was taken sick and confined to the bed which proved her death-bed. When she neared her end, and the shades of death began to settle down around her, she imagined that night was approaching, and that she was just retiring to her nightly rest. She began to repeat her accustomed prayer, and her voice growing feebler as she reached the last line, she whispered,

“ I pray the Lord my soul to t— ”

And with the last word unfinished she passed into the presence of Him who said, “ Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

## A FATHER'S TRIBUTE.

**I**N a public religious meeting a gentleman arose, and said he knew there was a great deal of practical unbelief on the subject of the conversion of little children. He alluded to the too common custom of fathers to throw all the religious instruction of children upon their mothers. The father rises early, eats a hurried meal, and goes to his business, and comes home late—too late even to kiss his children good-night—and the next day repeats the round. And so life is spent, and children see and hear little or nothing from their fathers in leading them to Jesus Christ.

He said he had lost three darling children by diphtheria recently. It was a consolation that those children were consecrated to Jesus as soon as they were born. They had instruction accordingly. The eldest, only nine years old, had a strong impression that he was to be a foreign missionary. He was always talking about his future work. And he began it by getting

some of his companions together, and reading and explaining the Scriptures to them, in a manner that was surprising to older listeners.

When he was taken sick, he said, "Father, I know I shall die. I am going to be with Jesus. I want to go. Don't give me any more medicine. Don't try to keep me. Let me go. I want to go." He died praying.

The second was only three years old, and seemed to have the same spirit of love to Jesus. When he was dying, and he could scarcely say a word, he told his mother he wanted to say his prayer. He was lying on her lap. She told him to say his prayer.


"Oh, not so," said the child; "I want to say them on my knees."

She raised him on his knees on her lap. He put his little arms around her neck, and with great difficulty uttered every word of

"Now I lay me down to sleep!"

When it was finished she laid him down, but he was gone—fallen asleep to wake and be "forever with the Lord."

## ON THE BATTLE-FIELD IN MEXICO.

 ONE of the soldiers in the American army, during the war with Mexico, was found mortally wounded, and was carried off by a comrade and laid under a tree. As the wounded man saw the life-blood flowing rapidly away, he said to his comrade, "Talk to me! Why do you not talk to me?" meaning to ask for some spiritual advice and direction. The comrade was not a religious man, and could not give it; although he remembered some words which he had learned at his mother's knee, and he began repeating, and the wounded man repeated after him, the simple prayer,

" Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take ! "

The lingering messenger of death paused till the prayer was uttered, when he took away the spirit into the silent land.

## LITTLE ANNIE.

**M**ORE than twenty years ago little Annie L—— the child of a good missionary, died in India. She was only three years of age, yet the closing of her life afforded a lovely type of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

She went as calmly to her last repose as the closing flower at nightfall. As her sight began to fail, though only three o'clock in the afternoon, she said to her parents, "Good-night, mamma ; good-night, papa !" — her usual words before going to sleep—and then went on to repeat—

" Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep !  
A—a—men."

Bless the child ! she was lying down to sleep—to sleep in the arms of Jesus, "who died for us, that



whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." She did not live to say—

"If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

But the Lord took her in the midst of her evening prayer, when she mistook the darkness of death gathering over her for the shades of evening, and, bidding her parents "Good-night," sweetly yielded her spirit to her Heavenly Father, who never slumbers or sleeps.

## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP

WITH MUSIC.

**I**N the west the beams of day  
Slowly, softly die away ;  
Now the evening shadows falling,  
All my better thoughts recalling,  
Wrap the earth in silence deep ;—  
Now I lay me down to sleep.

Father, hear my simple prayer,  
Take me now beneath Thy care ;  
Then, whose gentle hand has led me  
All day long, and kindly fed me,  
Still Thy child in safety keep—  
While I lay me down to sleep.

Should the messenger of death  
Steal away my fainting breath ;

Should I hear his spirit warning,  
Ere the dewy light of morning,  
Still Thy child in safety keep—  
Let me wake—no more to sleep.

# “NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.”

“I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.”—*Psalm 4: 8.*

Words by FANNY CROSBY.

T. J. COOK.

1. In the west the beams of day Slow-ly, soft-ly, die a-way:

Now the evening shadows fall-ing, All my bet-ter thoughts recalling,

Wrap the earth in si-lence deep; Now I lay me down to sleep.

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“NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.”

“ **N**OW I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

Well known, like words oft said and sung,  
And yet not known whence it hath sprung,  
This pray'r has moved the heart and tongue,  
For long, long years, of old and young.

Who is there that was led our plain, full tongue  
To know and speak when round the head were rung  
The strains which lull to sleep the babe's soft eyes,  
Learned not from lips most dear to lisp and prize  
These sweet old words of pray'r, our hearts shall keep,  
Keep and love,—“ Now I lay me down to sleep ” ?

Oh, who of us the hearts could think to tell  
That knew these lines, and used them long and well

Each eve, from those bright days that cheer the child,  
To days far on through scenes both stern and mild,  
When age bears down, and men, for their last sleep,  
Call out,—“ I pray the Lord my soul to keep ”

How oft that pray'r calls up to youth and age  
Dear home, loved forms, sweet hours, and God's blest page  
Brings back once more a time when all was bright,  
When heav'n was to the eyes all but in sight,  
And mind was wont in deep, calm thought to take  
The words,—“ If I should die before I wake ”!

Blest words, so framed that they might suit each tongue ;  
Well joined, for high and low, for old and young ;  
Fit words to use each night when bent the knee ;  
And fit the line, if this the last should be  
Of all the pray'rs we pray ere we shall wake  
In heav'n,—“ I pray the Lord my soul to take ”!



REV. JOHN NEWTON.

**R**EV. M. SHEELEIGH, of Pennsylvania, alluding to the following incident narrated of Mr. NEWTON, says :

“It possesses a double interest, as its subject became a pious and useful minister, and composed many hymns, numbers of which are found in the hymn-books of all churches. Such as these are widely and familiarly known :

“‘How sweet the name of Jesus sounds’;

“‘Safely through another week’;

“‘One there is above all others’;

“‘Lord! I cannot let Thee go’;

“‘O Lord! our languid souls inspire’;

“‘Oft as the bell with solemn toll.’

“Mr. NEWTON was born in England in 1725, and died in 1807. He lost his mother when he was seven years old, and his conversion to God took place in early manhood.”

JOHN NEWTON—a name known to all the friends of religion, both for the remarkable features of his religious history, and for the usefulness of his life—broke away in his youth from the restraints of a pious education, and became profligate, addicted to every vice, and connected himself as a mariner with a vessel engaged in slave-trading. Will you look into a mind so deeply debased for any remaining traces of his early education and of a mother's prayers? Behold him wandering upon the sands of Africa, so debased and wretched in character as to be despised and cast out by the negro savages. And can the memory of a mother's influence reach him here? He lies down upon the sands for his repose for the night—his thoughts stray back to the scenes of his childhood—he finds himself repeating the little prayer learned in the nursery :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take ! ”

The influence of other days rushes back over his mind with overpowering impressions. By the grace of GOD his soul is renewed ; the sequel you know.

It may seem a small matter to you now, mothers, that your children are fixing upon their minds the impression of that simple form of religious thought. But if you are binding upon the hearts of your children the cords by which, after wandering so far, they are to be brought back to hope and heaven, you are doing a great work.

## READY TO GO.

**I**T was bed-time for little Arthur; and in his white night-dress, with folded hands, he knelt by his aunt to pray. He asked God to take care of his absent father and mother; of Freddie, his elder brother; and of the baby; then offered that prayer so sweet for the children—

“Now I lay me down to sleep!”

So earnest were his petitions, and so full of confidence was he that he would be answered, that his prayer formed a strong contrast to many from older life. After kissing his aunt good-night, he looked up once more, and said: “Now, if my Father in heaven wants me to go home to Him to-night, I am ready to go!”

It was the utterance of a sweet child-like trust in God, such as should give consolation and peace to every Christian.

## MOTHER'S LAST WORDS.

**R**EV. S. IRENÆUS PRIME, D.D., editor of the *New York Observer*, writes of the death of his mother, as follows :

“ She was eighty-six years old ; her mind as vigorous and clear, and her spirit as elastic and cheerful as in the prime of her life. The day before she died, she asked me to read to her some of the Divine songs for children by Dr. WATTS, the most of which she had known by heart full fourscore years. As I read, she made remarks on them, showing how clearly she felt their force and beauty. The next morning as I came to her bedside (she was evidently dying), she said, ‘ lay me down.’ I arranged her pillow, thinking her head was not lying easily ; but she repeated, ‘ lay me down,’ and her tongue was refusing to do its office, so that she could hardly articulate. I held her hand in both of mine, while she

made one more dying effort to speak, and then I heard her say--

“‘Now I lay me down——’

and she went ‘to sleep’ on these words, the same that she taught me, holding my hand in hers, more than sixty years before.”



## A DREAM OF SECOND CHILDHOOD.

**I**N my family there resides an old man who has lived eighty-six years. He is a member of the church, but for several years past has been so feeble, both in body and mind, that he has not gone away from home, even to attend church. His mind, once strong and vigorous, has become broken, and he is at present more like a child five or six years old, than like a vigorous man. But he will sit down and take the Bible and read whole chapters aloud. At such times he seems to understand not only what he is doing, but seems to enjoy it greatly.

One evening after he had retired for the night, he called in his daughter, seeming to imagine that she was his mother.

“Mother,” said he, “come here to my bed, and hear me say my prayers before I go to sleep.”

His daughter obeyed and stood by his bed. Then

the old man clasped his hands with great reverence and repeated that child's beautiful evening prayer :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

He was apparently a child again, saying his prayers at his mother's knee.

“NOW I LAY ME.”

**N**OW I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.

Now I lay me down to sleep,  
A little child, dear Saviour, keep;  
Send to me pleasant dreams to-night,  
And guard me till the morning light.

And when at morn I ope my eyes,  
Oh, let my thoughts to Thee arise,  
Thanking Thee, Lord, for all Thy love,  
While looking from Thy heaven above.

Watch me, dear Saviour, through the day,  
While at my work, or at my play,  
So that wherever I may be  
Thine eye may still be guarding me.

And should I die before I wake,  
Oh, then my spirit, Jesus, take !  
Washed from my sins through Thy dear love,  
Oh, take me to Thy home above.

Thou sayest, "Children, come to Me";  
Dear Jesus, I *have* come to Thee;  
Oh, then, in life, in death, may I  
Upon Thy gracious love rely !

## THE PRAYER ON HORSEBACK.

**A** BISHOP of the Episcopal Church tells a story of an old friend of his who, on a certain occasion, was hard put to it to make a prayer. He was riding along the road on horseback, when something suddenly frightened his horse. He soon lost all control of the animal and gave himself up as lost. He wanted to pray, but could think of nothing to say. But there was no time to be lost—he must pray. He then remembered the little prayer his mother taught him, and, putting his hands down on the saddle and closing his eyes, he repeated out-loud :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

He told the bishop he felt a great deal better after the prayer, and that his fright was all gone. His horse stopped of his own accord, and the old gentleman escaped without harm.

“NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.”

**A**T her mother's feet, while kneeling  
With her head upon her lap,  
And her golden ringlets stealing  
From her loose and open cap,  
Knelt a child in years quite tender,  
With a smile my mind will keep,  
As she gently tries to render,  
“Now I lay me down to sleep.”

And her mother, while there list'ning,  
With her cheek and brow aglow,  
Could not keep her eyes from glist'ning,  
As the tears began to flow ;  
Then the child thus uttered faintly,  
As the mother stopped to weep,  
With her little hands clasped saintly,  
“Now I lay me down to sleep.”

Could I have this darling by me,  
How my heart with joy would leap ;



For I'd hear, if she was nigh me,  
    "Grant, O Lord ! my soul to keep."  
Then again she'd whisper softly,  
    "Should I die before I wake,"  
God in heaven, Thou, most lofty,  
    "Grant, O Lord ! my soul to take."

O, how lovely ! O, what rapture !  
    O, what beauty in that prayer !  
When a child with it can capture  
    Hearts that no man can ensnare.  
When I reach death's stormy billow,  
    And my friends around me weep,  
May some child lisp at my pillow,  
    "Now I lay me down to sleep."

“NOW I LAY ME.”

“**N**OW I lay me down to sleep—”  
Little heads so lowly bended—

“Now I lay me down to sleep—”

Little flock so gently tended—

“I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

God will keep their souls this night,  
Like a gentle, loving Father  
Keep them till the morning's light.

“If I should die”—Oh! spare them, Father—

“If I should die before I wake—”

Ah! the mother's head drops lower—

“I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

Little prayers so softly uttered,

Little angels kneeling there,

Little children, God will hear you

Offering up your evening prayer.

## NOW I LAY ME.

**N**OW that another day has flown,  
I, who have countless blessing knowr  
Would *lay me down* upon my bed,  
*To sleep* in peace till night has fled.

*I pray*, ere I my pillow press,  
*The Lord* will me in mercy bless,  
And that *my soul* His favor will  
Be pleased *to keep* all night from ill.

But *if* 'twere well in His blest sight,  
In whom *I* live each day and night,  
This form *should die*, so soon, and here,  
*Before I wake*, may I not fear.

And should I thus be called, *I pray*  
*The Lord*, my Maker and my stay,  
That He *my soul*, for JESUS' sake,  
From earth to heaven would deign *to take*.

## EVENING HYMN.

**T**HE day is past and over,  
I lay me down to sleep;  
May angels round me hover,  
And from all danger keep.

I thank the bounteous Giver  
For all His gifts this day;  
And pray that I may ever  
His care with love repay.

I pray Him to forgive me  
For every sin this day,  
And always strength to give me  
His statutes to obey.

I pray Him to awake me  
At early morning gleam;  
And when I die to take me  
To dwell in Heaven with Him.

## NOW I LAY ME.

**K**NEELING by her little bedside,  
Dimpled feet so white and bare ;  
Hands upon the bosom folded,  
Hear her lisp her evening prayer ;  
“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

In His arms He safely held me  
Through the long and happy day ;  
And when night's uncertain shadows  
Folded round her, she could say,  
“ If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

Like this little one, my Saviour,  
Let me come to Thee to-night ;  
Through the dark and silent watches,  
Guide me to the morning light.  
Take me to Thy loving breast,  
And fold me in Thine arms to rest.

On Thy love alone depending,  
Lead me to the life divine ;  
Let the prayer of trusting childhood  
In the fullest sense be mine ;  
If I wake or if I sleep,  
Tis Thou alone my soul must keep.



## "NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP."

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, \* \* \* ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."—*Matt. 6: 6.*

Words from "CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE."

A. J. ABBEY.

1. Kneeling by her lit - tle bedside, Dimpled feet so white and bare ;

Hands upon her bosom folded, Hear her lisp her evening prayer :

REFRAIN. *Slow.*

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep.

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## EIGHTY YEARS AGO.

**A** CORRESPONDENT writes to the compiler as follows :

“ I am now an old man, and I doubt not my mother taught me this prayer, say eighty years ago. Being an invalid, I usually use one of the following couplets :

“ ‘ If I am ne’er from this bed to rise,  
Give me sweet rest in paradise.’ ”

Or—

“ ‘ If I die ere I leave this bed,  
Give me sweet rest with Thy holy dead.’ ”

## AULD REEKY.

**A** SON of Scotland, who has spent the last fifty years of his life in this country, and is now standing at the head of his profession, gives the following tribute :

“In ‘Auld Reeky’ (Scotland), in the days of yore, I was taught *that* precious little prayer by my dear, good mother. When GOD gave me children I was led to feel its potency, and for years it was nightly repeated by my little ones at my own knee. They all feel its effect to-day, and show it, thank GOD !

“How strange ! Of late, when I have pillowed my head for the night, that little simple prayer has involuntarily sprung up in my mind, and with special devoutness I have felt to utter it. It brings back a thousand associations which have been stored away in the memory. They have frequently brought to me ‘Songs in the night.’ GOD *is* good.”

## THE CHRISTIAN SLUMBER-SONG.

“ **N**OW I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.  
*And this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.*”

The first four lines of this slumber-song are probably the most often repeated of any in the language. Other evening orisons there are, more stately and elaborate, but the brevity and pathos of this render it a general favorite. There is a poem on sleep by old Sir THOMAS BROWN—a nightly half-adieu to the world—of which the following striking lines are an extract :

“ Sleep is a death ; oh, make me try  
By sleeping what it is to die ;  
And as I gently lay my head  
On my grave as now my bed,  
Howe'er I rest, great God, let me  
Awake again, at last, with Thee ;  
(74)

And thus assured, behold, I lie  
Securely—or to wake or die.  
These are my drowsy days ; in vain  
I do now wake to sleep again.  
Oh, come that hour, when I shall never  
Sleep again, but wake for ever.”

And who does not know and love the immortal ‘Glory to Thee, my God, this night!’ by Bishop KEN, which, it is said, that excellent prelate always himself repeated before sleeping. The author of the simple stanza, “Now I lay me down to sleep,” bequeathed to humanity a far more valuable legacy than did BYRON, SHELLEY, GOETHE, or any other of the so-called *illuminati*, who have vexed feeble souls by their instillations of evil, and led them astray by their infidel scoffings at holy truths.

Its origin seems to be obscure, but by virtue of its age, value, and precious associations, it has attained to the rank of a devotional classic. Its very simplicity is one of its charms. Except in one word, it is composed entirely of monosyllables. No doubt it may be claimed as an American production, as I do not find a trace of it in any English book that I have met. BARTLETT accredits it to the “New England Primer” of the days of



our grandfathers. Perchance it is the reverent effusion of the so-styled "mirror of her age, and the glory of her sex," Mistress ANNE BRADSTREET, whose pen flourished two hundred and thirty years ago in Boston ; or it may be even more ancient. It is often quoted erroneously, "I pray *the*," instead of "I pray *Thee*" ; not the article *the*, but the pronoun *Thee*, is correct. The latter reading essentially alters the sense, making the appeal definite and personal.

Nor is the fondness for the modest poem limited to any class or age. Tens of thousands, inclusive of the profound scholar and the unlettered hind, the silver-haired pilgrim awaiting the opening of the celestial gates, and the lisping infant just entering on the journey of life, invoke nightly, in its quaint numbers, the blessing of the Father of all. A short time previous to his death, JOHN QUINCY ADAMS told his pastor that his mother had taught it to him in infancy, and that he never omitted to say it on retiring to rest. A distinguished judge of New York, who died some years since in extreme old age, made a similar assertion. An eminent bishop, in addressing a Sunday-school, said that every night since his mother taught it to him a babe at her knee, he was accustomed to repeat it before sleep-



ing. A venerable doctor of divinity, who perceived a mother teaching some short prayers and hymns to her children, remarked, "Madam, your instructions may be far more important to your children than you are now aware. My mother taught me a little hymn when a child, and it is of use to me to this day. I never close my eyes to rest without first saying :

" ' Now I lay me down to sleep, etc. ' "

An old shipmaster declared that even before he became a decided Christian, he never omitted it on turning in at night. It has even trembled on the lips of the dying. An affecting instance of this occurred at the death of a young man, a noted member of an Ethiopian minstrel troupe. A friend who was beside him in his last moments, relates that when one present asked him if he should read some good book to him, "Read me Shakespeare," said he, "read me Shakespeare." The gentleman urged him now to think of another world, saying, "Frank, there is yet time." Poor G—— said nothing for some moments. Death was rapidly approaching. He folded his hands across his breast. "*Time*," said he, at length, "*there is yet time !*" Then lifting his hands as if in supplication,

he commenced to recite the little prayer, probably taught him by his mother :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray to God my soul to keep.”

Here he paused and murmured, “ There is yet time,  
and continued to recite :

“ And if I die before I wake,  
I pray to God—— ”

Here he was rapidly sinking. He gasped, “ I pray to  
God—ah, time—time—

“ —— my soul to take.”

And as the last words died away on his lips, his spirit fled.

There was an aged saint of eighty-six years, the Rev. Mr. TAYLOR, familiarly termed *Father* TAYLOR, the famous sailor-preacher of Boston, whose mind had so failed that he did not recognize even his own daughter. A witness says that very touching was the scene on the last night of his life. He called his daughter to his bedside as if she were his mother, saying, like a little child, “ Mother, come here by my bed, and hear me say

my prayers before I go to sleep." She came near. He clasped his white, withered hands reverently, and whispered:

"Now I lay me down to sleep," etc. "Amen."

Then quietly fell asleep, and awoke in heaven.

Still, with all its excellence, the little petition lacks the vital element—the recognition of the Intercessor. Some one has added a fifth line which admirably supplies the deficiency, and makes it distinctly Christian:

"And this I ask for *Jesus*' sake."

So let us always say it.

Are mothers nowadays as assiduous in teaching their children divine songs as were the mothers of the olden time? Doubtless in rare instances they are, but are not many of the most valuable nursery rhymes sadly neglected? The beautiful cradle-hymn of Dr. WATTS—and who was a safer poet for children?—"Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber," full of pure divinity and tender worship, which was sung to her little ones by my own dear mother and hosts of other dear mothers now singing in joy in "Jerusalem-the-Golden," seems to be considered as old-fashioned, and to be superseded by

[others] inculcating a distorted theology most injurious in after-life. Only less evil are the trashy lilts and nursery rhymes with which thoughtless nurses quiet their charges. Let us prize the holy versicles our foremothers used to sing; let them still be used and cherished as sacred household words.

There is a companion prayer for the morning, author also unknown, which may be welcomed by some :

“ Now I wake me up from sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep;  
If I should die before the eve,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul receive.  
For Jesus' sake this mercy give. Amen.”

Melody has the effect of impressing words on the mind—we remember better what is sung than what is merely said; therefore, thinking that many might like to use it thus framed, I have composed for the dear old stanza, and sacred to itself, the music which may be found in the accompanying pages. I hope that it may receive a kindly greeting, and resound from many a chamber. The air will also suit the morning prayer. There is a pretty poem, in which, after alluding to the

memories which have haunted him from youth upward, the writer closes with the petition :

“ ‘ Now I lay me down to sleep ! ’  
Oh, my God ! when I am dying,  
Hear me pray that old-time prayer,  
On my haunted death-bed lying ;  
From the old dreams let me wake—  
‘ I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take ! ’ ”



# "NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP."

## THE CHRISTIAN SLUMBER-SONG.

Music by AUGUSTA BROWNE GARRETT. 1880.

*Con molto espressione.*

Now I lay me down to sleep, I

The first system of the musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and common time. It consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a whole rest followed by a half note G, then a quarter note A, and a half note B. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, featuring a series of chords and a melodic line with a trill. The bottom staff is the bass line, starting with a whole note G, then a half note A, and a half note B.

pray, Thee, Lord, my soul to keep ; If I should die be-fore I wake, I

The second system of the musical score continues the melody and accompaniment. It also consists of three staves. The vocal line continues with a half note C, then a quarter note D, and a half note E. The piano accompaniment and bass line continue with their respective parts.

*From "Leslie's Sunday Magazine," used by permission.*  
(82)



prayer Thee, Lord, my soul to take ; And this I ask for Je - sus' sake, And

*p*

This block contains the first system of a musical score. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the left hand and single notes in the right hand. A dynamic marking 'p' (piano) is placed below the piano staff.


this I ask..... for Je - sus' sake. A - MEN.

This block contains the second system of the musical score. It continues the vocal and piano parts from the first system. The vocal line has a long note with a dotted line indicating a sustained sound. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes. The system concludes with a double bar line.

MORNING PRAYER.

Now I wake me up from sleep,  
 I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep ;  
 If I should die before the eve,  
 I pray Thee, Lord, my soul receive ;  
 ¶: For Jesus' sake this mercy give. :|| AMEN.

## THE CHILD'S PRAYER IN OTHER TONGUES.

 CONTRIBUTOR to the *Guardian*, in connection with the subject of the Child's Prayer, wrote as follows :

“ We have many beautiful *German* prayers for little children, and I know that no one repeats them more fondly than I do. Here is one, for instance, which my dear old grandmother taught me when I was a little boy, and which I have been repeating, morning and evening, ever since that time :

“ Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit  
Das ist mein Schmuck und Ehrenkleid,  
Damit will ich vor Gott bestehen,  
Wenn ich in Himmel werd' eingehen.”

But, then, would it not be well if the Child's Evening Prayer would be repeated by our German and English children, and thus the communion of little saints be established ?

The writer then gives the following translation :

“ Nun leg' ich mich zu schlafen nieder,  
Der Herr sei meiner Seele Hüter,  
Und sollt' ich, eh ich wache, sterben,  
Mach' Er meine' seel 'zum Himmelserben.”

Another correspondent of the *Guardian* furnished the following translations :

“ O Jesu, zum schlafen, ich lege mich nieder,  
Behüt und bewache die Seel' und die Glieder,  
Und sollte ich sterben, eh das ich aufwache,  
O Herr mich zum Erben des Himmels doch mache.”

“ Nun leg' ich mich, es kommt der Schlaf,  
Ich bitte Herr, behüt dein Schaaf,  
Und sollt ich sterben, eh ich erwache,  
Ich mein Seele Dir ewig vermache.”

One of the most widely used of the prayers for children in the German language is the following :

“ Müde bin ich, geh' zur Ruh,  
Schliesse meine Augen zu,  
Vater, lass' die Augen dein  
Ueber meinen Bette Sein.”

“ Hab’ ich unrecht heut’ gethan,  
 Sieh’ es, lieber Gott, nicht an,  
 Deine Gnad’ und Jesu Blut  
 Macht allen Schaden gut.”

## TRANSLATION.

“ Tired I am, I go to rest,  
 Close my eyes in slumber blessed,  
 Open, Father, now Thine eye,  
 Be in care unto me nigh.

“ Did I commit any wrong !  
 Do not punish me too strong !  
 For Thy grace, and Jesus’ blood,  
 Is my shield before Thee, God ! Amen.”

The following translation of “ Now I lay me down to sleep,” is from the pen of Mr. — Zahm, of Lancaster, Pa. :

“ Nun leg ich mich zu schlafen hin,  
 Ich bit der Herr in meinem Sinn,  
 Das sollt ich sterben eh ich wach,  
 Er meine Seel gen Himmel trag.

A contributor to the *Guardian* (April, 1866) preserves the following prayer in German, very similar to

the English, which his mother taught to all the children. The editor states that the faults in the rhythm may be the result of long traditional use and preservation. The prayer had never been seen in print, but was given from memory :

“ Nun will ich mich legen und schlafen  
Und mich auf den lieben Gott verlassen ;  
Wenn mich der Tod erschleicht,  
So nim mich Gott in das Himmlische reich. Amen.”

THE SCOTTISH VERSION.

“ This night when I lie down to sleep  
I gi'e my soul to CHRIST to keep ;  
I wake a' noo, I wake a' never,  
I gi'e my soul to CHRIST forever.”

Which would be, in our English words, as a great many say it :

“ This night as I lie down to sleep,  
I give my soul to CHRIST to keep ;  
Wake I at morn, or wake I never,  
I give my soul to CHRIST forever.”

## THE PRAYER IN DUTCH.

**A** VERSION of the Children's Prayer in the Dutch language is given by a correspondent of the (N. Y.) *Christian Intelligencer*, who admits its traditional imperfections as a specimen of literature in the mother-tongue of the Hollanders. He explains its faults as follows :

“ It is a prayer, taught me by an old colored woman inherited as a slave by my mother, with whom she lived until the time of her death. She often repeated it to me in my childhood when putting me to bed. I also give an almost verbatim rendering in English.

“ ‘ Liever Vorder en der Hamel,  
Spor mij daur de nocht,  
Lort mij moyer oughent zinner  
En de ghrotness von die macht.’



TRANSLATION.

“ ‘Loving Father in the heavens,  
Spare me through this night,  
Let me see the handsome morning  
In the greatness of Thy might.’ ”

“The last line was for a long time quite a puzzle to me, but when I did comprehend its full meaning, the stanza took its place side by side with ‘Now I lay me down to sleep.’ ”

ANOTHER VERSION.

A second correspondent of the *Intelligencer* gave a more correct version of the prayer in the following lines:

Lieve Vader in den Hemel,  
Spaar mij weder in dees' nacht!  
Laat me Uw schoonen ochtend weerzien  
En de grootheid van Uw macht!



## THE PRAYER IN LATIN.

**D**R. L. H. STEINER, of Frederick, Md., contributed to the *Guardian* the following version of the prayer in Latin, by Rev. EDWARD BALLARD :

Nunc reclino ut dormirem  
Precor te, O Domine,  
Ut defendas animam ;  
Ante diem si obirem,  
Precor te, O Domine,  
Ut seares animam.  
Hoc que precor quo Jesu !

REV. ELIPHALET NOTT, D.D.

**R**EV. DR. NOTT, President of Union College, was one of the remarkable men of his day. His learning, eloquence, and scientific attainments, which assumed a practical form in several important improvements and inventions, gave him a distinguished place in the popular estimate, as well as in the literary and ecclesiastical sphere in which he moved. A correspondent of the *Boston Journal*, in a tribute to his memory, related the following :

“The last few hours of Dr. NOTT’S life were peculiarly impressive. He sank into a second childhood that was peculiarly tender. He lay on his bed blind and apparently unconscious. His wife sat by his bedside and sang to him day by day the songs of his childhood. He was hushed to repose by them like an infant on its pillow. WATTS’ Cradle Hymn, ‘Hush, my dear ! lie still and slumber,’ always soothed him. Visions

of home floated before him, and the name of his mother was frequently on his lips. The last time he conducted family devotions with his household, he closed his prayer with the well-known lines :

“ ‘ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.’ ”

## A PRAYER IN MONOSYLLABLES.

**I**T would be very difficult to compose a verse of four lines, all but one of the words being monosyllables, that should contain as much simple, natural, devotional sentiment as the familiar nursery stanzas :

‘ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

We do not think a word of it should be altered, or aught added to it, nor taken from it, without the final consent of all the children between two and five years of age, that can speak their mother-tongue, assembled in general convention, on some given day at 12 M. We have no objection to imitations or rivalries, but we insist upon it that those four lines, fragrant as they are with the breath of millions of the little ones whose

lips they have passed, shall be allowed to stand by themselves just as they are.

The following six lines are thought to be worthy of a place beside the others. The lines are very simple and appropriate, and we heartily commend them to parents and teachers as eminently suitable for a child's morning orison :

“ Now I wake and see the light ;  
’Tis God hath kept me through the night ;  
To Him I lift my voice and pray  
That He would keep me through the day ;  
If I should die before ’tis done,  
O God, accept me through Thy Son.”

## THE AGED PILGRIM'S FAREWELL.

**A** FEW years ago a prominent pastor of this city was called to visit an aged saint. She was very poor, and very ill, and her memory at the age of eighty-three was almost wholly gone. She said to the minister, as he sat at her bedside, "I forget even my prayers."

"Can you remember none of them?"

"No. I wish I could."

"You certainly remember 'Now I lay me'?"

"I could not say it through," she answered.

"Would you like to say it after me?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

Kneeling by her side he said over the first line, which she repeated after him. Then the second and the third lines. The fourth was dictated, and when she had repeated the words,

"I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take!"

he added,

“And this I ask for Jesus’ sake.”

There was no response, and on looking at her for the reason, he saw that her dear Lord had already answered the prayer of His child, and that, for her, the infirmities of earth were gone forever.



## DR. THOMAS HASTINGS.

ONE evening in the fall of 1845 or '46, I attended the weekly prayer-meeting held in Dr. HUTTON'S church on Washington Square. Among the most prominent members of that church at the time was Dr. THOMAS HASTINGS, whose pure life and deep and fervent piety shone as brightly from his benevolent face as from the beautiful words and music of those exquisite hymns by which he is now more generally remembered.

The chief subject of thought and remark on that evening was "childhood's prayers"; what they should be, who should teach them, and in what way. Dr. HASTINGS was one of the last to speak. Always impressive in his address, his manner became even more earnest than usual, and his voice took a deeper pathos, thrilling the heart of every listener, as he said in concluding:

"A little child's prayer! If possible let them be learned only from loving lips and a loving mother's heart.

Of all prayers, other than our Lord's, none is so dear to me, even now, old as I am, as 'Now I lay me.' It was the prayer of my childhood, and still, to this day, I never 'lay me down to sleep' without again repeating those blessed words that I learned so long ago, at a tender, sainted mother's knee."

No one that saw his tall, venerable form and silver locks, and heard his voice so full of emotion as he said these words, can ever forget the incident.

REV. GARDINER SPRING, D.D.

**T**HE eminent Pastor of the Brick Church, in the city of New York, Rev. GARDINER SPRING, D.D., was born in Newburyport, Mass., February 24, 1785, and died August 19, 1873, in the eighty-ninth year of his age, after a pastorate of sixty-three years in that church. Rev. JAMES O. MURRAY, D.D., in his discourse on the life and labors of Dr. SPRING, gives the following tribute to his closing hours :

“ Nothing, indeed, could be more beautiful and comforting than the close of his life. His great and increasing weakness seemed to involve a degree of mental wandering. But it was all of a delightful tenor—some of it deeply touching, and some of it sublime. While yet in the full possession of his faculties, he spoke of the solemnity of dying—of going into the immediate presence of a holy GOD—dwelling on this thought as if his whole soul was penetrated through

and through by it. But he soon added: 'I have one to appear for me there—my Advocate with the Father—JESUS CHRIST the righteous,' and then, for some time, in the most exalted strain of adoration, praised the glories of his Saviour, as if he had caught a glimpse of the King in His beauty, and it had loosed his tongue to sing of His love and His faithfulness. During his mental wandering, it was most touching to see how he imagined himself an aged clergyman far from home—longing to get there by Sunday—appealing to all about him to bring him on his way. But was not his wandering the true picture of his soul weary of absence from the heavenly home—longing to reach it, that he might keep his Sabbath in the upper Sanctuary? Once, asking for hymns in which he delighted, one standing by began repeating, 'Rock of Ages.' His ear caught a mistake in the recital. He began the hymn himself, repeating it to the end, without hesitation or mistake. It is recorded of Dr. GUTHRIE, that during his last illness he was never tired of hearing what he called the bairns' hymns. But it was a far more striking illustration of how the mightiest disciple must enter the kingdom of God only as a little child, to overhear Dr. SPRING, lying like an aged patriarch in the midst of his

household, in broken accents repeat the child's prayer learned years before at his mother's knee: 'Now I lay me down to sleep.' And still more striking was it to hear, at the close of a prayer which seemed to have taken him back again into the times of his childhood—  
'And make me a good boy, for Christ's sake. Amen.'"

## THE CHILD-MARTYR AT THE GATE.

**T**HE Pastor of St. John's Church (Lutheran), New York, among other incidents of his ministry, contributes the following to the pages of this volume :

“ Part of the wall of a burned house had fallen on a six or seven year old boy, and terribly mangled him. Living in the neighborhood, I was called in to see the stricken household. The little sufferer was in intense agony. Most of his ribs were broken, his breast-bone crushed, and one of his limbs fractured in two places. His breathing was short and difficult. He was evidently dying. I spoke a few words to him of JESUS, the ever-present and precious Friend of children, and then, with his mother and an older sister, knelt before his bed. Short and simple was our prayer. Holding the lad's hand in mine, and repeating the Children's Gospel :—‘ Suffer the little children to come unto Me,



and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,' he disengaged his hand from mine, and folded his. We rose from our knees. His mind began to wander. He called his mother. 'I'm sleepy, mamma, and want to say my prayers.' 'Do so, darling,' replied the sobbing mother.

“ ‘Now I lay me—down—to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord! my soul—to keep;—  
If I—should—d-ie—’

“He was beyond the river of death. On the wings of that simple prayer, that has borne so many of the lambs into the Good Shepherd's bosom, his soul had sped to Him that gave it.

“I can see his little pale figure, with clasped hands and closed eyes, like a sleeping angel before me this moment, though more than nine years have passed since the incident occurred.

“How that mother treasured that prayer! No sermon, probably, ever made the impression on her heart that those few lines made, coming from the lips so soon to be speechless forever.

“God bless the unknown hand that wrote these four beautiful lines!”



## REV. HENRY MORRIS.

**A** LONG and successful ministry has been closed by the recent death of one of the oldest pastors of the Reformed Church. The *Christian Intelligencer* gave its readers the following interesting facts in a memorial published in its columns :

“Rev. HENRY MORRIS died at Binghamton, N. Y., Oct. 17th, aged 78. He was born in Washington Co., N. Y., and was a graduate of Hamilton College and Princeton Seminary. His earlier ministry was spent in New England. He entered the Reformed Church in 1843, serving at Union Village and Easton, N. Y., for five years each, and at Cuddebackville from 1855-’62. He was in the service of the Christian Commission during the war, in North Carolina. He has since supplied pulpits at Port Jervis and various other places, and some years ago was declared *emeritus*. He removed

to Binghamton in 1867. On the 10th of last May, he and his estimable wife celebrated their golden wedding. His surviving descendants number nine children, eighteen grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

“During his long ministry he was often engaged in revivals of religion, and his labors were greatly blessed. He was deeply interested in the progress of CHRIST’S Kingdom, and his continual prayer was for the spread of the Gospel over the whole world. He was a diligent student in classical, theological, and biblical literature. The last few months he spent much of his time in examining and comparing the Revision of the New Testament.

“He kept his heart young and fresh even down to old age. In his last sickness he spoke often of the ‘perfect peace within,’ and of his longing to see his Saviour. One evening as the accustomed hour of prayer drew near, and he felt the shadows gathering about him, he closed his weary eyes and repeated the familiar prayer of his childhood :

“ ‘ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,

I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take!  
And this I ask for JESUS' sake.'

“And so he indeed entered into the kingdom of  
heaven as a little child.”

## THE CHILD'S UNFINISHED PRAYER.

“**N**OW I lay me”—say it, darling;  
“Lay me,” lisped the tiny lips  
Of my daughter, kneeling, bending  
O’er her folded finger-tips;  
“Down to sleep,” “To sleep,” she murmured,  
And the curly head drooped low,  
“I pray the Lord,” I gently added,  
“You can say it all, I know.”

“Pray the Lord,” the words came faintly;  
Fainter still, “My soul to keep;”  
Then the weary head lay over,  
And the child was fast asleep;  
But the dewy eyes half opened,  
When I clasped her to my breast,  
And the dear voice softly whispered,  
“Mamma, God knows all the rest.”

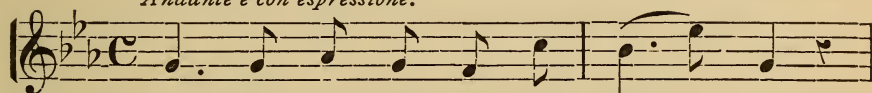
Safely to His care consigning,  
With a kiss I stole away ;  
So may I, in peace reclining,  
Breathe the words she tried to say,  
When life's moments fast are fleeting,  
And the shadows nearer creep—  
When this heart shall cease its beating,  
And I lay me down to sleep.

*Chorus*—Thus in childhood's days of pleasure,  
With a tender voice to guide,  
First I learned the words to treasure,  
By a gentle mother's side.

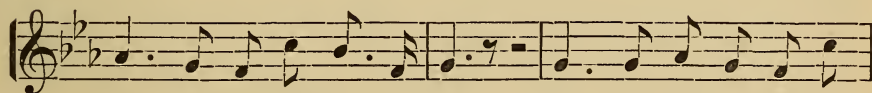
# THE CHILD'S UNFINISHED PRAYER.

FRANK H. H. THOMSON.

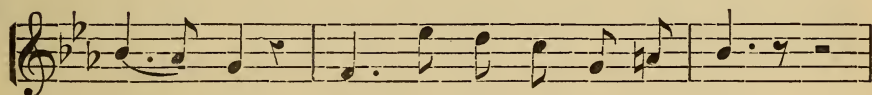
*Andante e con espressione.*



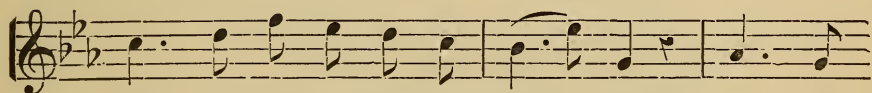
1. "Now I lay me"—say it, dar - - ling ;



"Lay me," lisp'd the ti - ny lips Of my daughter, kneeling,



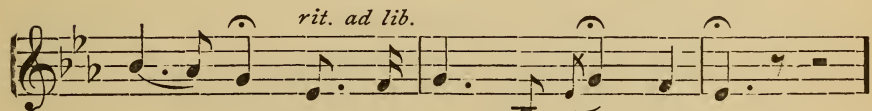
bend - ing O'er her fold-ed fin - ger tips.



"Down to sleep:" "to sleep," she mur - mur'd, And the



curl - y head droop'd low ; "I pray the Lord," I gen - tly



add - ed—"You can say it all, I know."

*Song and Chorus—published by J. M. STODDART & Co., Philadelphia.  
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*p* CHORUS.

Thus in childhood's days of pleas - ure, With a  
ten - der voice to guide, First I learn'd the words to  
treas - ure By a gen - tle moth - er's side.

2 "Pray the Lord," the words came faintly,  
Fainter still "my soul to keep;"  
Then the weary head lay over,  
And the child was fast asleep;  
But the dewy eyes half opened,  
When I clasped her to my breast;  
And the dear voice softly whispered,  
"Mamma, God knows all the rest."

3 Safely to His care consigning,  
With a kiss I stole away:  
So may I, in peace reclining,  
Breathe the words she tried to say;  
When life's moments fast are fleeting,  
And the shadows nearer creep,  
When this heart shall cease its beating,  
And I lay me down to sleep.

## THE BISHOP'S PRAYER.

**A** LADY, now gone to her rest, after a long and painful illness, related an incident communicated to her by a friend in a conversation on the subject of praying with the sick, the Children's Prayer and kindred topics. Her friend moved in the more elevated classes of society, having culture, wealth, and social position. Her brother was a man of the world, gay, thoughtless of religious things, and careless of the future. He was prostrated by sickness, which at length became alarming in view of the apparent approach of death. He consented to have a clergyman call on him, and the Bishop of that Diocese was invited to visit the dying man. He came accompanied with one of his colleagues, and after some conversation, he knelt down to pray, using the form of the Prayer-Book, to which he added some extemporaneous petitions at the close, and then quietly stood a little while at the head of the bed watching the patient before they left.

The room was still. The weary invalid, thinking the visitors had departed, turned to his sister, and said, "Pray for me!" Unused to praying in the presence of others, and especially before such auditors, she hesitated, but yielded to his second request, "*Pray for me,*" and knelt down by his side, while with earnest and softened tones she said :


" Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord ! my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord ! my soul to take.  
And this I ask for JESUS' sake. Amen."

With eyes still closed, but earnestly, he made the request, " Say that again, sister," which she did. When the prayer was ended, he turned his head, and said :

" There, that prayer does me more good than all the Bishop read out of the book ! "

The clergymen quietly and reverently withdrew, and when the sister attempted to excuse her brother's expression, not knowing that they were present, the good Bishop acknowledged that he had learned a lesson he would not forget, that sometimes the simplest utterances of the soul's desire are better and more comforting than the loftiest language the tongue can speak.

## THE PEACEFUL SLEEPER.

HRISTIAN experience presents itself to believers in varied forms and under varying lights and shadows, and there are some who seem to have an impression that more or less of doubts, haltings, and fears are a necessary part of Christian life, and the evidence of acceptance at the throne of grace. They do not seem to understand the meaning of the inquiry—

“Why should the children of a King  
Go mourning all their days?”

I knew one example of this kind, an earnest Christian woman, who had a devoted and lovely daughter, who became herself a mother, and was suffering under the fatal touch of consumption. The final symptoms manifested themselves in hasty succession. When the last hour came, her mother, who was overwhelmed with awful ideas of death and the judgment, and who seemed

to think that doubts and fears are necessary evidences of grace, asked her how she felt about her soul.

“Why, mother,” she answered, “the way seems so clear to me, that the only trouble I now have is that I have no doubts or fears.”

The watching mother shook her head in silence. The daughter said :

“Mother, clasp my hands together.”

The mother obeyed, and when the hands were clasped, and her eyes were closed, with countenance all radiant with faith and hope and love, she distinctly articulated with her last breath—

“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.”

She did not add—

“This I ask for Jesus’ sake !”

for she had fallen “asleep in Jesus.”

## LITTLE EYES AND LITTLE HANDS.

**L**ITTLE eyes,  
Like the shining blue above,  
Full of light and love,  
Full of glee ;  
Telling of a life within,  
In a world of sin,  
Born to you and me !  
Will they see the golden way  
Leading up to day ?  
And the God to whom we pray,  
In the skies ?

Little hands,  
In the long and weary strife  
Of a toiling life,  
Will they win ?  
Will they early learn to bless ?  
Rescue from distress ?

Will they fear to sin ?  
For the true, the good, the right,  
(115)



Will they bravely fight ?  
Strew along the paths of night  
Golden sands ?

Little feet,  
Entered on a thorny way ;  
Will it lead to day  
And renown ?  
As its rugged steeps are trod,  
Will they climb to God,  
And a seraph's crown ?  
Where the loving Saviour goes,  
Finding friends or foes,  
Will they follow till life's close,  
As is meet ?

Little eyes,  
May they wear an angel's guise  
In the upper skies !  
Little hands,  
May they, doing God's commands,  
Rest in fairer lands !

May these little feet  
These, dear Saviour, run to meet  
At Thy mercy-seat ;  
And with joy for sins forgiven,  
Press to heaven !

## THE CHILDREN'S BED-TIME.

**T**HE clock strikes seven in the hall,  
The curfew of the children's day ;  
That calls each little pattering foot  
From dance and song and livelong play ;  
Their day that in her wider light  
Floats like a silver day-moon white,  
Nor in our darkness sinks to rest,  
But sets within a golden west.

Ah ! tender hour that sends a drift  
Of children's kisses through the house,  
And cuckoo notes of sweet " Good-night,"  
That thoughts of heaven and home arouse ;  
And a soft stir to sense and heart,  
As when the bee and blossom part ;  
And little feet that patter slower,  
Like the last droppings of the shower.

And in the children's rooms aloft  
What blossom shapes do gayly slip  
Their dainty sheaths, and rosy run  
From clasping hand and kissing lip,  
A naked sweetness to the eye—  
Blossom and babe and butterfly  
In witching one, so dear a sight !  
An ecstasy of life and light.

And, ah, what lovely witcheries  
Bestrew the floor ! an empty sock,  
By vanished dance and song left loose  
As dead birds' throat ; a tiny smock  
That, sure upon the meadow grew,  
And drank the heaven-sweet rains ; a shoe  
Scarce bigger than an acorn cup ;  
Frocks that seem flowery meads cut up.

Then lily-drest in angel-white  
To mother's knee they trooping come,  
The soft palms fold like kissing shells,  
And they and we go singing home—  
Their bright heads bowed and worshiping,  
As though some glory of the spring,  
Some daffodil that mocks the day,  
Should fold his golden palms and pray.

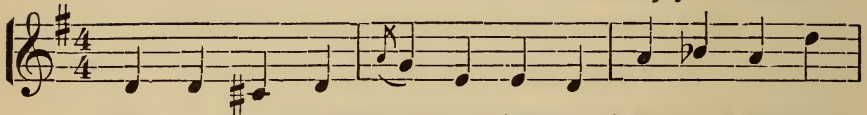
The gates of Paradise swing wide  
A moment's space in soft accord,  
And those dread angels, Life and Death,  
A moment veil the flaming sword,  
As o'er this weary world forlorn  
From Eden's secret heart is borne  
That breath of Paradise most fair,  
Which mothers call "THE CHILDREN'S PRAYER."

Ah, deep pathetic mystery !  
The world's great woe unconscious hung,  
A rain-drop on a blossom's lip ;  
White innocence that woos our wrong,  
And love divine that looks again,  
Unconscious of the cross and pain,  
From sweet child-eyes, and in that child  
Sad earth and heaven reconciled.

Then kissed, on beds we lay them down,  
As fragrant-white as clover'd sod  
And all the upper floors grow hushed  
With children's sleep, and dewes of God.  
And as our stars their beams do hide,  
The stars of twilight, opening wide,  
Take up the heavenly tale at even,  
And light us on to God and heaven.

# THE UNFINISHED PRAYER.

Music by J. P. WEBSTER.



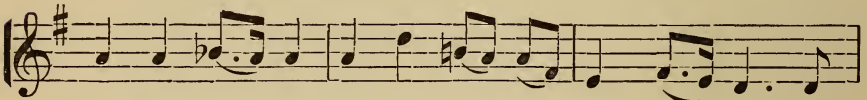
"Now I lay me"—say it, dar - ling, "Lay me," lisp'd the



ti - ny lips Of my daughter, kneel-ing, bend - ing



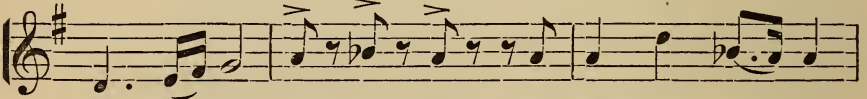
O'er her fold - ed fin - ger tips. "Down to sleep"—"to



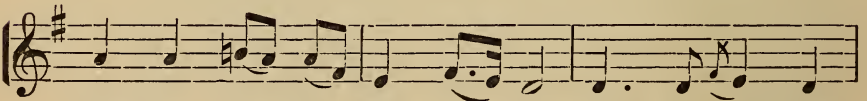
sleep," she murmur'd, And the curl - y head droop'd low: "I



pray the Lord," I gen - tly add - ed, "You can say it

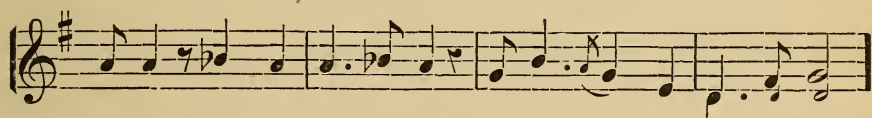
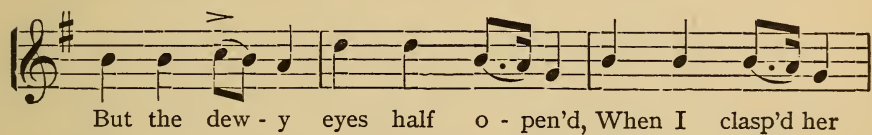
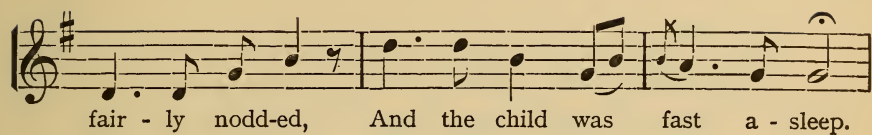


all, I know." "Pray the Lord," the words came faint - ly,

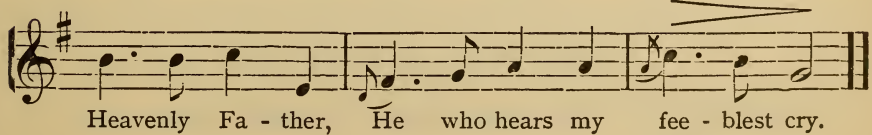
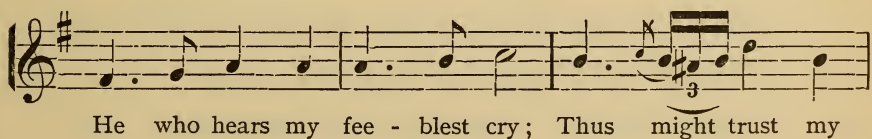
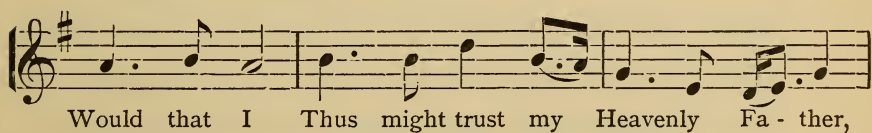


Faint-er still "my soul to keep;" Then the tired head

*Used by permission of O. DITSON & Co., Boston.*



CHORUS.





## THE CHILDREN'S ALTAR.

**T**HE author of the following lines, NATHANIEL P. WILLIS, wrote very little that is more gracefully and delicately expressed than his heart-harmony of

### SMILING IN SLEEP.

- . They tell me thou art come from a far world,  
Babe of my bosom ! That these little arms,  
Whose restlessness is like the spread of wings,  
Move with the memory of flights scarce o'er—  
That through these fringed lids we see the soul  
Steeped in the blue of its remembered home ;  
And while thou sleep'st, come messengers, they say  
Whispering to thee—and 'tis then I see  
Upon thy baby lips that smile of heaven !

O God ! let *these* stay on—  
The angels who now visit her in dreams !

And let the light and music which the world  
Borrows of heaven, and which her infant sense  
Hails with sweet recognition, be to her  
A voice to call her upward, and a light  
To lead her steps to Thee !

This sweet inspiration of tenderness and love, and this aspiration for the better life of our children, cannot be more surely realized than by leading them in their earliest years to bow reverently in prayer and thanksgiving to their Maker, and thus training them in the early dawns of faith and trust to look up to Heaven for their blessings and their joys.

The scientist may seek to overthrow the faith of believers in prayer and its benedictions, by materialistic reasoning and affected insight into the unknown ; the atheist may scoff and blaspheme, and all the forces of philosophy and reason may seek to crush or ridicule the duty and the privilege and blessings of prayer ; but in the face of them all there stand the testimony and the experience of millions, some of them as learned, as distinguished, and as mighty as themselves. From a NEWTON and a KEPLER, to the youngest infant in the divine faith, the testimony is the same.

As a simple and single instance of the faith and spirit

of a child, the following is rescued from the columns of the secular press. It was published as one of the interesting incidents which occurred during a severe storm in the month of February, 1881:

“In the sparsely settled village of Hardenburg, N. Y., lives a family named OSBORN, consisting of father, mother, and one daughter, a child of six years old, named Nellie. When the last heavy snow-storm fell, both Mr. and Mrs. OSBORN were lying sick, suddenly stricken down by fever, and Nellie was alone in the house with them. Living in an isolated place, far from neighbors, and being scantily supplied with the necessities of life at this severe and inclement season, with snow lying three or four feet deep everywhere, the situation may be imagined. Little Nellie did what she could to alleviate the sufferings of her parents in every way. It was bitterly cold; their rude little house offered poor resistance to the wind, the bed-covering was not abundant, and the supply of fire-wood was finally exhausted. The child knew the fire must be kept up, and rather than let it go out she took her wooden toys—her treasured playthings—and cast them on the embers; then she kneeled by the couch of her sick mother and prayed—‘Please, dear Lord, send a big, good

man to help us.' Help came in the person of JAMES MCGAVITT, a lumberman of the mountains, who finding the family in this deplorable condition, exerted himself to afford prompt relief."

This is an illustration of a child's faith, and who would seek to destroy such a spirit, and the power of such a life, if it could be preserved in all the consistent beauty of years of manhood or womanhood, in the maturity of an intelligent and sustained experience.

The lines of JAMES MONTGOMERY utter a truth which the devout of every age have known and felt, in the proportion in which they have had nearness to God :

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed ;  
The motion of a hidden fire,  
That trembles in the breast.

"Prayer is the simplest form of speech  
That infant lips can try ;  
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach  
The Majesty on high."

Several forms of evening prayer for children, which are designed to give a more complete expression to the desires of the heart, are to be found in various

collections, and without being imitations, they breathe naturally the same spirit as “Now I lay me down to sleep.” Two of them are herewith given as examples :

“ Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,  
O hear, great God, the words I say ;  
Preserve, I pray, my parents dear,  
In health and strength for many a year ;  
And still, O Lord, to me impart  
A gentle and a grateful heart,  
That after my last sleep, I may  
Awake to Thy eternal day.”

---

“ I go to bed as to my grave,  
And pray to God my life to save ;  
But if I die before I wake,  
I pray to God my soul to take ;  
Sweet Jesus, now to Thee I cry,  
To grant me mercy ere I die—  
To grant me mercy, and send me grace,  
That heaven may be my dwelling-place.”

Children thus taught may in after-times be enabled to say with the inspired writer :

“ I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep ; for  
Thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.”—PS. iv. 8.



## RENDERINGS OF THE PRAYER.

THE question has been raised, and very properly, relative to the true reading of the prayer, in the second and fourth lines. By a very general custom these lines have been used and printed with the words "the Lord," making a simple declaration of the act of prayer, and it is so given in the publications of the AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY, and in the musical publications of BIGLOW & MAIN. Other publishers and writers prefer the use of the pronoun in the invocatory form—

"I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep."

A venerable correspondent, whose initials, "N. B. H.," will be found in the Table of Contents, in a critical note on this subject, remarks: "I doubt not my mother taught me this prayer say eighty years ago, with double *e*, for I have not seen it in print with the single *e* until within a few years past."



A writer in the *New York Evangelist* (1879) contended for the use of the pronoun in the following statement of the argument :

“NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

“If that beautifully simple and simply beautiful child’s prayer, ‘Now I lay me down to sleep,’ etc.—equally suited to the child and the philosopher, the simpleton and the sage—were just now for the first time published to the world, the Church would grow wild over its beauty, simplicity, and its universal adaptedness to the needs of every child of God, young and old, great and small. Familiar as are its words, yet few observe how incorrectly it is now understood, and how much of its force and strength is lost by reason of this incorrect rendering. Everybody says, ‘I pray the Lord my soul to keep,’ and ‘I pray the Lord my soul to take.’ The proper and stronger rendering is, and should be recognized and adopted, viz :

“‘I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep,’

and

“‘I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.’

To say 'I pray the Lord,' is simply a declaration, an announcement of a fact or act. To say 'I pray Thee, Lord,' is an act of worship. This little prayer is repeated in the lone stillness of the night, when 'none but God can hear,' and is supposed to bring the soul in special and peculiar nearness to God. It is the day's last motion of the soul to God, and should imply a special personal approach to God.

"It is all-important to the child, in its first inceptions and conceptions of the divine thought, that it should get a right start in the right direction. The child should be made to understand that God is as really a living, present God, as its mother, at whose knee it bends and bows, is a living, present mother, and that it should go to God in prayer with the same conviction of being heard and answered as it goes to its mother to ask for any favor or gift. Would any child throw its arms around a mother's neck and say, 'I beg the mother to grant me this favor'? Would it not rather say, 'I beg thee, mother'? These are little things, but 'little drops of water make the mighty ocean.' So in forming early religious impressions.

"I ask then that you publish these suggestions, and the prayer after this style :

“ ‘ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take,’

and say if this rendering has not more of the elements of true prayer than the ordinary and universal rendering.”

AUGUSTA BROWNE GARRETT, whose essay, “The Christian Slumber-Song,” is found in this volume, decides in favor of this form of the prayer. OLIVER DITSON & CO., of Boston, in their musical publications also observe the same reading, and other authorities unite in its use.

In collecting and reproducing the incidents and poems which fill this little volume, the compiler has adhered to the text of the various authors, and has not taken the responsibility of attempting any corrections of either selected or original narratives or poems.

Without assuming any authority as an arbitrator in the question which is thus presented, he has adopted as the utterance of a devotional spirit, and the breathing of the heart in its appeal to the Divine Giver, the form of the invocation given at the opening of the volume, thus :

‘ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord ! my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord ! my soul to take.”

#### A MONOSYLLABIC PRAYER.

The structure of the prayer has been noticed by several writers, in the fact that all the words, with a single exception, are monosyllables. This exception occurs in the third line—

“ If I should die *before* I wake.”

The almost universal use of this petition, and its endeared associations for so many generations, seem to forbid the attempt to correct or to alter it in any way, yet a strict grammatical construction and interpretation of the sentiment would sanction a change, and unify this feature of the whole verse. Thus—

“ If I should die and do not wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord ! my soul to take.”

#### THE ADDED LINE.

There is apparently as much difficulty in tracing the origin of the fifth line, which has become a part of the

prayer, as in the discovery of the author of the prayer itself. It has been inserted in, and omitted from, the various selections and manuscripts as they have come to the hands of the compiler without change—its use being dictated by the preferences of the writers. It is an appropriate and well-expressed utterance of faith in the Advocate and Friend, and simply formulates in metric numbers the spontaneous plea doubtless offered by countless lips before it was added in printed form, “For Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

## ANTIQUITY OF THE PRAYER.

**T**HE antiquity of the prayer is generally conceded, and HEZEKIAH BUTTERWORTH, in his "*Story of the Hymns*" (American Tract Society), gives it a period of about two centuries, and declares that it was "altered from Dr. WATTS," but gives no reference whatever to justify it. The writer has seen nothing in the hymns or songs of this great author of the hymns of the Church to warrant this conclusion; the only ground upon which it seems possible to base this supposition being the latter part of Psalm IV, which he paraphrases as follows :

" Thus with my thoughts composed to peace,  
I'll give mine eyes to sleep ;  
Thy hand in safety keeps my days,  
And will my slumbers keep "



The old Scotch version (Matthew Henry's edition, 1790) reads :

“ I will both lay me down in peace,  
And quiet sleep will take,  
Because Thou only me to dwell  
In safety, Lord, dost make.”

MILTON renders the text in these lines :

“ In peace at once will I  
Both lay me down and sleep ;  
For Thou alone dost keep  
Me safe, where'er I lie ;  
As in a rocky cell  
Thou mak'st me safely dwell.”

“ The Children's Prayer ” does not bear the impress of being a parody or an alteration, but is evidently a pure and simple utterance of its own thought—even though it might have been suggested by the text of the Psalm.

## THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PRAYER.

**W**HO is the author of this little prayer? On this point Rev. Dr. BULLARD, of the Massachusetts Sunday-school Society, says:

“I really do not suppose there is any living person who can throw any light on the subject of who is the author of ‘Now I lay me down to sleep!’ For thirty years I have tried to keep my eyes and ears open to ascertain, and have not yet succeeded.” After such an endeavor by a man so favorably situated to ascertain the fact, who can hope to solve the mystery?

So far as we know, its first appearance has not been traced further back than the “New England Primer.” We saw some years ago an article in which it was traced to this source, but whether it was said to have appeared in the first edition, or only in a subsequent one, we are not able to remember. The authorship has been

ascribed to Dr. WATTS; but this, so far as appears, is not based on any historical facts; it has been rather supposed, as its simplicity and spirit naturally reminds one of WATTS. It is not found in any of his works.

To know the author of this beautiful prayer would seem to be desirable. Yet that knowledge would only satisfy curiosity, without conferring any benefit. True, the author of it has won for himself an honor which one would hardly exchange for that of being author of "Paradise Lost," yet he enjoys it no less in heaven for its being unknown on earth. If the author is ever to be discovered in that happy place, the millions of little ones who uttered their first devotions in its language will find him out; and it will be a happy thing for him that he will then be beyond the danger of being made vain by their praise!

Is there not a beautiful and significant providence in the fact that its authorship is on earth unknown? It is only the more purely a true and catholic form of devotion as being entirely dissociated from its human source. It now belongs wholly to piety and the Church. It speaks now from the heart of the Church, and is the voice of her general life, and is not the utterance of any one of her organs. It seems to be the way and the

habit of the life of Christianity to make human names and individualities disappear in her devotions. Hence her sublimest creeds, hymns, and prayers cannot be definitely traced to any precise time at which they originated, or to any particular individual from whom they proceeded.

Who is the author of the Apostles' Creed? Who of the Nicene Creed? Even the Athanasian Creed cannot be shown to have as its author the father whose name it bears. It has been attributed to St. Hilary and to Virgilius as well. Who is the author of the glorious old litanies? That sublime, ancient, angelic hymn, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, has also been attributed to various authors—to Telesphorus, to Symmachus, to St. Hilary. Not even the time of its origin, much less its author, is known. The same is true of the *Te Deum*. Some ascribe it to St. Ambrose, some to him and St. Augustine, and others to St. Hilary, and still others to Nicotius, Abonidius, and Sirebutus. The fact is, that no one knows when it originated, or who is its author. The same obscurity hangs over the origin and authorship of many others of the most excellent hymns used in the devotions of the Church.

We lose nothing by this mystery. It aids rather in

making these devotional forms more sacred to us. The fact that the name and circumstances connected with their origin have disappeared, is an evidence rather of their truly catholic spirit and character. The piety of the Church produced them by the genius of its modest and retiring children, and in its devout love of them it thought not permanently of those gifted fellow-heirs of the common faith, who were not only willing, but anxious that their own humble names might disappear on earth to shine in heaven.

On this principle we have always been averse to the practice of having the names of their authors appended to hymns in the hymn-books of the Church. These forms of devotion which furnish true pious utterances to our hearts are to us truer and better in the sweet forgetfulness of all human instrumentality in their production. The mystery which hangs around the *Gloria in Excelsis* and *Te Deum* makes them seem to us as if they had come from heaven, and had only been caught up in some glorious hour of sublime sanctuary jubilee by "the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, and the holy Church throughout the world."

In like manner this little prayer has no one to claim



it. It belongs to mothers and the children. In using it there is nothing to think of but its own blessed sense. It comes to the couch of infancy like an angel visit, giving no account of itself other than in the blessing it imparts to the trusting heart of childhood.

However, if any one knows where it came from, let him tell it for the satisfaction of the curious. If not, it shall be all the more dear and interesting to us for the mystery that hides its source. Like the "Letters of Junius," or the Ossianic poems of McPherson, wise men shall study more carefully its contents, with the hope of finding reflected in it some features of the great *stat in umbra*. Meanwhile, little children may regard it, as they do the beautiful things on their Christmas-tree, as a gift presented by the unseen hand of the CHRIST CHILD Himself.



## THE CATHOLICITY OF THE PRAYER.

**A**S no man claims its authorship, so no sect or branch of Christendom can claim it as exclusively suited to its own peculiar religious views and ideas of devotion. No one has ever heard, from any quarter, that it has been charged with heterodoxy. True, in its original form, as including only four lines, it has been thought defective because it does not express formally that prayer must be offered up through the mediation of JESUS CHRIST, and hence a final line has been added, at a time and by a hand unknown. Thus:

“And this I ask for JESUS’ sake.”

But may not the child be taught to address the whole prayer directly to Christ under the name “Lord,” under which name He is frequently mentioned in Scripture?

The popularity of the prayer evidences its catholicity. It has been found so well adapted to its need, that it is almost universally in use ; and is, in the English tongue, the classic infant prayer. It is safe to say, that ever since its existence millions of children in every generation have been taught to use it ; and there is not an evening that settles down around the habitations of men when this prayer is not lisped from a countless number of infant lips.

Its use is not confined to any class or condition of society. It is the prayer of the rich and of the poor, of the learned and unlearned, and of the high and the lowly. It ascends from huts and hovels, from cottages and farm-houses, from palatial city residences and princely country villas.

It is not strange, then, but altogether natural, that this little prayer of childhood should have been found to many so dear and precious, even when the almond blossoms began to cover their heads with their crown of soft white glory. It is said that JOHN QUINCY ADAMS and also Bishop HEDDING, of the Methodist Church, were in the habit of repeating this prayer every night from the time it was taught to them by their mothers to the end of their lives. The same is true of thou-

sands, who find the words and spirit of this prayer altogether adapted to their devout use in commending themselves into the hands of God just before closing their eyes in nightly sleep.

There have also been instances of notoriously wicked men, who, when danger threatened them on sea or land, anxious to pray, but unable to utter anything, began with the words imbedded in their memory by a mother's pious care, teaching them "Now I lay me down to sleep." An instance is well authenticated of a man who had been piously trained by his mother, but who afterward boldly affected to be an atheist. Overtaken by a fierce thunder-storm, when on a journey on horse-back, he rode hastily for shelter under a tree which was soon after struck by lightning; fearfully alarmed, and scarcely knowing whether he were dead or alive, he commenced crying out, "Now I lay me down to sleep."

Such incidents reveal how shallow a thing infidelity is. It may coil itself like a deceitful serpent around *the mind*, and be a presence there, cold to the sense of the victim and repulsive to the one who beholds it, but it fails in most cases to reach the *heart*, which always gives a true signal; and especially if a mother's care and love have once filled that heart with fragrant re-

ligious memories, it will carry its latent riches of reverence for sacred things even when the outward life has been deformed and disfigured by sin. No doubt this little prayer, instilled into the heart in innocent childhood, has been in thousands of cases a "seed that remained" when mind and life had been corrupted and spoiled by the rude, unbelieving, and sinful ways of the world. The same feeling which caused the dying lieutenant in a hospital to exclaim, "God of my mother, hear me!" will cause many a prodigal, who may otherwise cast off all restraints and habits of piety, to call to mind, as he lies down for the night, this beautiful prayer so often repeated after his mother's voice in earlier, purer, and better days.

A mother's influence is proverbial. Out of the quiet, inner circle of home life she moulds, and afterward by her own spirit in them, still rules kings and princes, the great, the wise, the speculative men of the world. Even King Lemuel will not forget, amid the splendors of the throne, the words "that his mother taught him." Let philosophers go on with their teaching, the mother's influence shall not be far behind them. If her lessons do not even outreach their wisdom, they will surely mingle with them, and sanctify them to their true

end and use. Let not the day of small things be despised,

“For little things,  
On little wings,  
Bear little souls to heaven!”

Sooner or later you must “lie down to sleep,” when this prayer will be all your soul can take—all that will avail of your rank, or wealth, or fame, whatsoever you most prize in this world, which is but the shadow of eternity. We shall soon pass the

“Green threshold of our common graves”;

but the little prayer, the first, may be, that we took upon our childish lips, shall follow us as we sail out under the solemn arches of the “River of Death”—follows us as a sweet, faint, tender air from the shores, and when we shall cast anchor—

“The Lord our soul shall take.”



## THE PICTURED PRAYER.

**W**HILE Poetry, Song, and Legend have made their contributions to the history of the quartette lines, the circle is not complete without the aid of the artist. On this theme, the Professor of Languages in Franklin and Marshall College wrote for the *German Reformed Messenger* (1865), as follows :

### THE CHILD'S PRAYER.

“Now I lay me down to sleep.” This little poem belongs to the golden age of our human life. “Heaven lies about us in our infancy.” It is all made up of monosyllables, one word excepted, easy to be lisped, and we had mastered it in our memories, we all know, long before we had the letters of the alphabet, from the fond dictation of our mothers, and our repeating it after her every night, without a miss, as we kneeled devotionally at her knee. When this happy repeating of it



first began we cannot now go back so far in our memories as to ascertain, but it now remains associated with the Lord's Prayer, of which it was the forerunner; and after we had committed both of them, before this lesser one of human origin, we always repeated first the divine one. The great composer of it is unknown, but he has his reward. We never find it printed or published on a card, in red or golden letters, ornamented in handsome style, as are often the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, to attract the eyes of the young, and impress them on their memories. It is forever written on the tables of our hearts, and it cannot be effaced.

But though never published by itself, nor with a commentary, it is not without its legends and incidents, showing the deep hold it has taken on the religious feelings of our nature; the most touching one of which, we think, is that of the suffering little boy, who, when the night of death was creeping over him, and his eyes could no longer distinguish objects, supposed it was the natural night coming on, and, to compose himself to sleep, he commenced saying his little prayer; but ere he had reached the close of the last line, "I pray the Lord my soul——," his tongue refused to utter

and he fell asleep in Jesus. "Blessed sleep, from which none ever wakes to weep."

No wonder that the artist, too, has sometimes seized upon it, making the little repeater of it the subject of his pencil. Before us now we have a picture of this description, which was painted by Holfeld, and engraved by the distinguished artist, A. B. Walter. The little worshiper, however, is not represented at his mother's knee. The clothes having been turned down, and the pillow yet uncrushed, the child in dishabille is kneeling on its soft mattress, with its hands folded and its eyes upraised in faith, in the act of repeating this little prayer. It is all alone, but the room is lighted up. It is not repeating it after another, but by itself in sincere devotion, for its own conscience' sake. It could not have slept otherwise. Presently, when it has laid its little hand upon its pillow, its mother will come in and tuck the clothes snugly around it, and after bidding it good-night, with a parting kiss, she will turn off the light and leave the room, and then how soundly and sweetly will it sleep all the hours, knowing that God's holy care is ever around it!

The little child is represented not as a cherub, nor even as an angel without wings. Such an idealistic

being might have looked more beautiful, but how much farther would it have been removed from our human sympathies ! It is a *bona fide* little child, of healthful form and expressive countenance ; such, indeed, as might be met with in noble halls, but just as often in lowly cottages. It is the sincere act of devotion in which it is engaged, and the hallowed associations of the prayer itself in the memories of all, that throw around the picture its charm, and make it truly poetical. While giving pleasure to the most cultivated and refined sensibilities, it cannot fail coming home also to the hearts of the common people. It would grace any parlor, it is true ; but its most proper place, we fancy, is in the nursery, over the children's bed—the last thing to be seen by them at night, and the first thing to meet their eyes in the morning. In a quiet way such things of art and beauty have an educational force, improving the taste and social and religious feelings ; and happier always will be the family, we think, which will fall early under their refining and hallowing influences.

## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

“**N**OW I lay me down to sleep,  
And the blue eyes dark and deep  
Let their snowy curtains down,  
Edged with fringes golden brown ;  
All day long, the angels fair,  
I've been watching over there ;  
Heaven's not far, 'tis just in sight,  
Now they're calling me, good-night ;  
Kiss me, mother, do not weep,  
Now I lay me down to sleep.”

*Chorus*—Over there, just over there,  
I shall say my morning prayer ;  
Kiss me, mother, do not weep,  
Now I lay me down to sleep.

Tangled ringlets, all smooth now,  
Looped back from the waxen brow,  
Little dimpled hands so white,  
Clasped together cold to-night ;

Where the mossy, daisied sod  
Brought sweet messages from God,  
Two pale lips with kisses pressed,  
There we left her to her rest,  
And the dews of evening weep  
Where we laid her down to sleep.

*Chorus*—Over there, just over there ;  
List ! the angels' morning prayer,  
Lisping low, though fancy creep,  
“Now I lay me down to sleep.”

## TRIBUTE OF AN UNKNOWN MINER.

“NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.”

**N**EAR the camp-fire's flickering light,  
In my blanket bed I lie,  
Gazing through the shades of night  
At the twinkling stars on high ;  
O'er me spirits in the air  
Silent vigils seem to keep,  
As I breathe my childhood's prayer,  
“Now I lay me down to sleep.”

Sadly sighs the whip-poor-will  
In the boughs of yonder tree ;  
Laughingly the dancing rill  
Swells the midnight melody ;  
Foemen may be lurking near,  
In the cañon dark and deep,  
Low I breathe in Jesus' ear,  
“I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep.”



'Mid those stars a face I see,  
One the Saviour called away,—  
Mother who in infancy  
Taught my baby lips to pray ;  
Her sweet spirit hovers near,  
In this lonely mountain brake.  
Take me to her, Saviour dear,  
“ If I should die before I wake.”

Fainter glows the flickering light,  
As each ember slowly dies ;  
Plaintively the birds of night  
Fill the air with saddening cries ;  
Over me they seem to cry,  
“ You may nevermore awake,”  
Low I lisp, “ If I should die,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.”

“NOW I LAY ME.”

“**N**OW I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

Very many of our readers were taught at the cradle to repeat this prayer every night. Millions of children, in our country, and other English-speaking countries, have used these lines as a prayer for generations past. This prayer is now loved next to the Lord's Prayer. Many beautiful and touching stories have been told and written about it. Good and learned men and women are reported as having used it through all their lives. Sometimes it has been uttered in the wanderings of the mind under disease and old age, and by those passing away by death. Little children have repeated it not only when closing

their eyes in sleep, but also when mistaking the dimness of sight, as death came near, for the shadow of night.

Some one has added to the little prayer a fifth line, which is sometimes printed with it for those who desire it. The words are :

“And this I ask for Jesus’ sake.”

Lately some one has thought a change had been made, by mistake, in the first and third lines; so that now, instead of saying, “I pray the Lord,” we should say, “I pray Thee, Lord.” The latter form, it is said, must have been the original form. This claim may possibly be correct, as it puts the language in the shape of a more direct address to God.

It is a singular fact that the authorship of this prayer is not known. Many inquiries have been made, but no satisfactory answer has yet come to light. It seems, however, to have been produced in America, probably in the Eastern States. Some have thought that it first appeared in the “New England Primer,” a little book that not a few old folks still remember as containing those couplets on the alphabet, beginning thus :

“In ADAM’s fall,  
We sinned all.”

One writer hints that perhaps it was written by Mrs. ANNE BRADSTREET, of Boston, the earliest female author in America, who died a little more than two hundred years ago.

## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

**A**S “now I lay me down to sleep,”  
May angel guards above me keep,  
Through all the silent hours of night,  
Their watch and ward till morning light.  
Dim evening shades around me creep,  
As “now I lay me down to sleep.”

“I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep,”  
The while I wake or while I sleep ;  
And while I work and while I play,  
Give me Thy grace that day by day,  
Thy love may in my heart grow deep—  
“I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep.”

“If I should die before I wake ;”  
If I this night the world forsake,  
And leave the friends I hold most dear ;  
Leave all that I so value here,  
And if Thy call my slumbers break—  
“If I should die before I wake :—  
(156)

“I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take ;”  
I pray that Thou wouldst for me make  
Close at Thy feet a lowly place,  
Where I may e’er behold Thy face,  
And this I ask for Thy dear sake—  
“I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.”

While bending at my mother’s knee,  
This little prayer she taught to me—  
“Now (as) I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.”



# NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

EUGENE H. PULLEN.

Music by Mrs. J. M. BARRINGER.

1. "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my  
soul to keep," Was my childhood's ear - ly pray'r,  
Taught by moth-er's love and care; Ma - ny years since  
then have fled, Moth - er slum-bers with the dead;

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of four systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 6/8. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The piano accompaniment features chords and moving lines in the left hand.

Yet, me-thinks I see her now, With love - lit eyes and

ho - ly brow, As, kneel-ing by her side to pray, She

CHORUS.—*Slow & soft.*

gen - tly taught me how to say, Now I lay me

down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

“NOW I LAY ME.”

“**N**OW I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,”  
Was my childhood’s early pray’r,  
Taught by mother’s love and care ;  
Many years since then have fled,  
Mother slumbers with the dead,  
Yet methinks I see her now,  
With love-lit eyes and holy brow,  
As, kneeling by her side to pray,  
She gently taught me how to say,  
“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

Oh, could the faith of childhood’s days,  
Oh, could its little hymns of praise,  
Oh, could its simple, joyous trust,  
Be recreated from the dust  
That lies around a wasted life,  
The fruit of many a bitter strife ;  
(160)

Oh, then at night in pray'r I'd bend,  
And call my God, my Father, Friend,  
And pray with childlike faith once more,  
The prayer my mother taught of yore,  
"Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

## JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

**I** SEE in *The Churchman* of May 31 that Mr. CHARLES MARSEILLES, journalist, wishes information as to whether JOHN QUINCY ADAMS was in the habit of saying every night on retiring the "beautiful prayer" beginning "Now I lay me down to sleep." I do not remember ever to have seen the incident in print in connection with this distinguished statesman and Christian; but I remember the incident, because it was deeply impressed on my mind by Mr. ADAMS himself.

I was living in Washington from the last part of 1846 to the close of 1848. Mr. ADAMS had been a member of the House for fourteen or sixteen years, perhaps. In 1847 I became well acquainted with him, and frequently met with him and talked with him in the House of Representatives. I remember one morning, in 1847, that I met him before the House was called to order. He was very feeble. It was not long before the subject of religion was introduced by Mr. ADAMS. Among other things, I remember his saying: "There are two

prayers I love to say—the first is the Lord's Prayer, and because the Lord taught it; and the other is what seems to be a child's prayer, 'Now I lay me down to sleep,' etc., and I love to say this because it suits me. And," he added, "I love this prayer so much that I have been repeating it every night for very many years past, and I say it yet, and I expect to say it my last night on earth if I am conscious. But," said he, "I have added a few words to the prayer so as to express my trust in Christ, and also to acknowledge what I ask for I ask as a favor, and not because I deserve it. This is it," said he, and then he repeated it as he was in the habit of saying it:

Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take,

*For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

This was in 1847. He died in 1848 while I was living in Washington, and I have no doubt but that the "child's prayer that just suited" him was reverently repeated every night until he died.

I have never before this given the incident for pub-



lication, but I have often spoken of it to my friends ; and I now very gladly give it as the information desired by your correspondent.

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*To the Editor of The Churchman :*

In answer to the inquiry made in your last issue respecting the use by JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, nightly to his dying day, of the sweet little evening prayer beginning "Now I lay me down to sleep," I desire to say that I have preserved from boyhood several fugitive articles giving a collection of interesting facts about this little prayer which has been used by thousands in their evening devotions. I find in these articles three references to its use by President ADAMS. One is as follows : "Tower's Pictorial Reader mentions as a fact related of JOHN QUINCY ADAMS that during his long life he never retired to bed without repeating this prayer of his childhood." Then some lines of a forgotten poet are quoted having a distinct reference to this devout practice of President ADAMS :

The statesman gray,  
His massive brow all hung with laurel leaves,  
Forgets his honors while his memory weaves

A picture of that home, 'mid woods and streams,  
Where hoary mountains caught the sun's first beams—  
And clasping his great hands—a child once more—  
Upon his breast, forgetting life's long war—

Thus hear him pray :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

May I be permitted to suggest to the journalist who makes the inquiry in your columns that he interview a number of typical modern politicians—our so-called statesmen—as to their devotional habits, for the admiration of future generations. It might be edifying even to us to know how far public affairs are in the hands of prayerful men.

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The interesting fact having been made public that the late President of the United States, JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, made use of the children's prayer to his latest days, an inquiry was made by CHARLES MARSEILLES, Esq., Exeter, N. H., relative thereto. The following letter is the reply of Rev. Dr. GEORGE E. ELLIS :

BOSTON, *June* 20, 1890.

MY DEAR SIR: In answer to your question I would inform you that if you will look at the "Memoirs of John Quincy Adams," vol. xii., pages 108-9, you will note that he mentions me as one of a delegation of the Massachusetts Historical Society attending with him, November, 1844, an annual commemorative meeting of the New York Historical Society. We lodged at Bunker's Mansion House. It was my privilege, as he felt the infirmities of seventy-eight years, to do him some little personal services. At bed-time, after some lively and interesting talk, he would say something as follows: "It is time to go to sleep, and I must say my every-night prayer, which my mother taught me, as I have said it every night in Europe and America." Which he did, repeating distinctly the four lines you have written:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

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The compend of experiences associated with the time-honored form of prayer, "Now I lay me down

to sleep," is full of rich and varied lessons. The prayer is in itself the natural utterance of human sentiment for all ages, classes, and conditions of men, while the additions, paraphrases, and versifications repeated are the historic attestation of its universal adaptation. It has been said of the Lord's Prayer, that it is so catholic in sentiment and expression, that not only Christians of every persuasion, and Hebrews or Mohammedans of the present day, but even Greeks and Romans of Christ's day,—all men, whatever their religious faith, might join in it. It is, however, so wide in extension and so deep in comprehension, that only the profoundest and broadest intellects can grasp its thought; while the petition of the evening bedside is so limited in scope, as well as simple in expression, that the child's mind takes in its thoughts. Yet more: when in the decay of the bodily powers the half-waking utterance makes "sleep the brother of death," it is just what the dying child, soldier, or patriarch naturally lisps when falling asleep in JESUS. The several additions made to it give a historic attestation of its universal acceptance. It is taught now, as a century ago, to American children by parents reared in every communion speaking the English language; as the

writer has in this country and in Great Britain personally observed. The added line,

“And this I ask for JESUS’ sake,”

is the expression of a doctrinal sentiment suggested to Christian parents. Varied other additions have been made evidently from individual sentiment, as seen in the stanza heard from English children especially trained :

“GOD made the sky that looks so blue ;  
GOD made the grass so green ;  
GOD made the flowers that smell so sweet,  
In pretty colors seen.”

His varied life, having scarcely a parallel in American or European history, adds emphasis to the enduring power of faithful maternal instruction ; lasting and ruling, because the human spirit is made for truth by its Creator and Redeemer. Born in 1767, trained by his devoted mother amid the trying times that called his father from home, the child was left to the mother’s sole moulding. The expression of Hon. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS in his old age was this : That he never ceased to feel the pressure of his mother’s hand on his head as



he knelt at her knee to repeat the prayer, whose repetition on retiring at night he could never neglect.

The testimony of such a man is a distinguished illustration of the power of a mother's teaching.

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CHARLES MARSEILLES submits the following query :  
"In the old 'New England Primer' is the following simple and beautiful prayer :

'Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.'

Somewhere, I do not remember where, I have seen that JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, 'the Old Man Eloquent,' he who was President of the United States, nightly to his dying day (he lived to the age of nearly eighty-one years) repeated this simple prayer on retiring. I very much desire to know if such was the fact, and if so, where and in what it is chronicled in print. Cannot you, Mr. Editor, or some of your multitude of readers, kindly inform me, or suggest to me where and of whom I might possibly learn ?"



We shall have to refer our correspondent's query to our multitude of readers. It would be interesting if at the same time they could solve the problem of its authorship, although it is more than probable that that is impossible. BARTLETT ascribes the quatrain to the "New England Primer." It may be found there, indeed, credited to one "Mr. Rogers the martyr, whose wife and ten small children are so well known," but it is far older than the "Primer" or Mr. Rogers. Rev. THOMAS HASTINGS, in the "Mother's Nursery Songs" (1848), ascribes it to WATTS; but, again, it is older than WATTS, and, furthermore, the nearest that WATTS came to it is in the following :

"I lay my body down to sleep,  
Let angels guard my head ;  
And through the hours of darkness keep  
Their watch around my bed.

"With cheerful heart I close my eyes,  
Since Thou wilt not remove ;  
And in the morning let me rise  
Rejoicing in Thy love."

In mediæval times it appears to have been known as the White Paternoster, being so styled in the "En-

chiridion Papæ Leonis, MCLX." ADY'S "Candle in the Dark," 1655, quotes it in the following form :

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John  
Bless the bed that I lye on,  
And blessed Guardian Angel, keep  
Me safe from danger while I sleep.

"I lay me down to rest me  
And pray the Lord to bless me ;  
If I should sleep, no more to wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

CHAUCER, in his "Night Spell," alludes to it :

"Lord Jhesu Crist and Seynte Benedyht  
Blesse this hous from every wikked wight,  
Fro nyghtes verray, the white Patre nostre  
When wonestow now, Seynte Petre's soster."

A more modern variant runs as follows :

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John !  
God bless the bed that I lie on !  
Four corners to my bed,  
Four angels round me spread !  
One at the foot and one at the head,

And two to keep  
My soul asleep !  
And should I die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take  
For my Redeemer, Jesus' sake !”

It is evident that Protestantism gradually rejected the saints and angels from the invocation, and remodelled the lines into the form that is now familiar to us. In the original form, or something like it, the White Paternoster occurs in the popular hymnology of every country. Thus QUENOT, “Statistique de la Charente,” gives it as follows :

“ Dieu l’a fait je la dit,  
J’ai trouvé quatre anges couchés à mon lit  
Et le bon Dieu au milieu.  
De quoi puisje avoir peur ;  
Le bon Dieu est mon père,  
La Vièrge ma mère,  
Les Saints mes frères,  
Les Saintes mes sœurs,  
Le bon Dieu m’a dit  
Lêve-toi, couche-toi  
Ne crains rien ; le feu l’orage et la tempête,  
Ne peuvent rien contre toi ;

Saint Jean, Saint Marc, Saint Luc et Saint Matthieu

Qui met les âmes en repos

Mettez-y la mienne si Dieu le veut."

In the Loire :

"Jésus m'endort,

Si je trépasse, mande mon corps,

Si je trépasse, mande mon âme,

Si je vie, mande mon esprit."

In Sardinia :

"Anghelu de Deo,

Custodia meo !

Custa nott—illumina me,

Guarda e defende a me

Ca eo mi incommando a Tie."

And other forms may be found in other parts of France and Italy, in Germany, and elsewhere.

## VARIATIONS OF ENGLISH HOMES.

**T**HE following variations are selected from "Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain," by JOHN BRAND, M.A. Arranged, revised, and greatly enlarged by Sir HENRY ELLIS, K.H.F.R.S., Sec. S. A., etc., Librarian of the British Museum. Vol. III.

"The following charm and prayer is used at this day in Westmoreland. It is taught by mothers, as well as nurses, to young children ; and is repeated by them on retiring to rest :

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,  
God bless the bed that I lie on ;  
If anything appear to me,  
Sweet Christ, arise and comfort me."

---

"Four corners to this bed,  
Six angels round me spread ;  
Two to pray, two to wake,  
Two to guard me till daybreak ;

And blessed guardian angels keep  
Me safe from danger while I sleep.”

---

“ I lay me down upon my side,  
And pray the Lord to be my guide ;  
And if I die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

---

“ Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,  
Bless the bed that I lie on ;  
All the four corners round about,  
When I get in,—when I get out.”



“NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.”

**A** WIDOW sat watching her fair-haired boy  
One weary, winter day,  
As burning with fever and racked with pain  
The little sufferer lay ;  
But the day went out and the night came down,  
The pain had passed away ;  
And the child looked up, and the mother bent down  
To hear what he should say.

“ Kiss me, mother, let me go,  
Where is no more pain nor woe ;  
Kiss me, mother ; do not weep—  
‘ Now I lay me down to sleep.’

“ O mother ! the angels stood round my bed,  
All day they sang to me ;  
And sweetly they told me of that bright land  
That lies beyond the sea ;  
And they told me too of a river pure  
Whose waters I shall drink,  
(176)

And it flows so still through a beautiful vale ;  
I'm near it now, I think.

Kiss me, mother, let me go,  
Where is no more pain nor woe ;  
Kiss me, mother ; do not weep—  
'Now I lay me down to sleep.'

"And Annie, my sister, that died, you know,  
Just four long years ago ;  
I thought she came with them and stood just here,  
In robes as white as snow ;  
And she sang of Christ and of heaven so bright  
That I forgot my pain ;  
And I think to-night, as you watch by my side,  
That she will come again.

Kiss me, mother, let me go,  
Where is no more pain nor woe ;  
Kiss me, mother ; do not weep—  
'Now I lay me down to sleep.'"

## EVENTIDE.

“**N**OW I lay me down to sleep”—  
Long and hard has been the day ;  
I have come a weary way  
Since life's morning, but at last  
Night is falling sweet and fast—  
“Now I lay me down to sleep.”

“I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep”—  
I have tried—alas! in vain—  
From the world's dark soil and stain  
Free to keep it. Weak and worn,  
With my strength all overborne,  
“I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep.”

“If I should die before I wake”—  
Treasures have slipped so fast away  
From my keeping day by day,  
And I shrink from coming ill ;  
This thought holdeth joy's glad thrill—  
“If I should die before I wake.”

“I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take”—  
From all the sorrow it hath known,  
Sin and loss, and tear and moan,  
To the dear ones gone before,  
To Thy presence evermore,  
“I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.”

“This I ask for Jesus’ sake”—  
Name alone that can prevail,  
Anchor-hold within the veil!  
Every other plea hath flown;  
Worth or merit claim I none;  
“This I ask for Jesus’ sake.”

## TEACH THE LITTLE ONES TO PRAY.

**H**E was a strong, healthy man, in the very prime of his years. He had been nurtured by a Christian mother, who had gone to her rest and reward long ago. The man was not a bad man in any outrageous way, but he was a worldly man whose thoughts and affections and hopes did not extend beyond this life. For years he had not entered a church, unless to attend a funeral.

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, he was stricken down. For a few days there seemed no danger, and then an unexpected change for the worse revealed to the experienced eye of the attending physician the fact that his patient was beyond all medical aid. He was a Christian physician, and realized that he had a duty to perform to the souls as well as to the bodies of his patients, so he gently told the already dying man that his days were numbered.

At first he was incredulous. He, who had never

known a day's illness until that very week, dying! It could not possibly be!

But already a mortal weakness was stealing over him, and he began to realize that his physician had spoken truly. And then the lessons learned at his mother's knee—and forgotten, alas! for so many years—came back to his startled soul. There was no time to think of his worldly affairs now. For once they took their true importance in his estimation. Turning his face to the wall he repeated aloud the prayer his mother taught him long years before, and which perhaps he had never repeated since—that blessed prayer Christ Himself taught His disciples, and which has risen from the hearts of millions of His followers down through the ages since, and which will continue to voice the aspirations of His children to the end of time:

“Our Father which art in heaven.”

After a little silence he again spoke, but faintly and with failing utterance. The physician leaned over him to listen. Slowly he said that other prayer that the lips of generations of children have hallowed:

“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep.”



He completed the prayer and it was his last utterance. The shadows of the night of death were all around him, and he sank into the sleep that knows no waking. Let us hope that a gracious Lord answered his petition,

“If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take ;  
And this I ask for Jesus’ sake,”

and forgave him, even at his last hour, as He did the penitent on the cross.

Mothers, whose little ones gather around you in the evening clad in pure white robes for the slumbers of the night, teach them to clasp their little hands and with reverently closed eyes to say these same prayers. It may be that in coming years, when your eyes are closed forever and your hands clasped over pulseless breasts, the memory of these prayers may be the only link binding back your child to religion and God and heaven.

But let us also hope and pray that the habit thus early formed will never be forgotten, and that the children so trained will live in constant communion with Him who hears and answers prayer.

## THE LITTLE PRAYER.

**A** LITTLE maiden knelt one night—  
A little maiden all in white—  
She knelt and said her simple prayer,  
Asking the dear Lord's tender care,  
That while her eyes were sealed in sleep,  
He would her soul and body keep.

A stranger sat within the home,  
A man whose wont it was to roam,  
Who had no God, no church, no heaven,  
In his hard creed, no sins forgiven ;  
No faith, no hope, no bed-time prayer,  
No trust in God's protecting care.


He watched at first half mockingly  
The child beside her mother's knee,  
With eyes down-drooped and folded hands,  
While o'er her shoulders golden strands  
Of hair fell down, and snow-white feet  
Peeped from her gown all fair and neat.

“And now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take : ”  
So prayed the child, whose faith and love  
Wafted her simple words above.

The proud man listened, and the years,  
So full of sin, doubt, griefs, and fears,  
Seemed blotted out, and he, once more  
A child, was kneeling on the floor  
Beside his mother, while he prayed  
The same prayer as this little maid.

Dear childhood's prayer, so sweet, so strong!  
With power to hold the heart so long,  
And melt the frost of years away,  
Until the scorner longed to pray ;  
And humbly ere he went to sleep,  
Besought the Lord his soul to keep.

## THE DYING SOLDIER AT SOUTH MOUNTAIN.

 ON the Sunday before the battle of Antietam, the battle of South Mountain was fought, and during the most of that awful day I witnessed some of the saddest scenes of my army life.

It was my first experience under artillery fire, and I was very nervous and excited, yet many of the incidents remain vividly impressed upon my memory, clear and distinct after the lapse of thirty years.

On Monday morning, my Company, acting as body-guard to Gen. AMBROSE E. BURNSIDE, passed over the mountain on the way to Antietam. When we reached the summit some time was spent viewing the battlefield, which presented a terrible picture of the destruction of human life, and the sufferings of the dying and the dead, lying in winnows, covering all the open ground.

In one corner and on the brow of the mountain, stood a log-cabin, with an old broken door and one

window. Into this wretched refuge more than twenty of the wounded, representing both the Blue and the Gray, had been taken for shelter and treatment. I passed among the wounded, giving them to drink from my canteen. Under the impression that I had attended to all the sufferers, I was about to pass out and away, when I heard a faint voice calling me in the name of GOD for something to quench the thirst that was consuming him. The voice was from behind the open door, and the gloom gave no token of the presence of the sufferer. But a match was lighted, and revealed the helpless and dying soldier.

A young man, clad in Confederate gray, pulled an old army blanket from his side, and revealed an awful wound made by a shell, which had torn away the most of his hip-bone. After quenching his thirst, I asked him who he was, and where he came from. His name, if it was given, is forgotten; he said he was the youngest of five boys, all of whom had been killed in battle, and that his mother, in her devotion to the Confederate cause, had insisted upon his going into the army also. His home was at Paducah.

I saw that death was swiftly coming, even as I was talking with him. As I was turning away, he suddenly

said in a pitiful tone, "Can't you say a word to GOD for me? Pray—do pray." I was not a praying man then, but I felt a deep sympathy for the last son of a mother bereaved of all her heroic children, and all that I could do was to ask the Heavenly Father to bless him in the precious words:

" Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

His fainting whispers followed me as I spoke, but before I had ended the prayer his spirit had passed away to answer the roll-call at the gateway of the eternal.



“NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.”

**T**HE fire upon the hearth is low,  
And there is stillness everywhere;  
Like troubled spirits, here and there,  
The firelight shadows fluttering go.  
And as the shadows round me creep,  
A childish treble breaks the gloom,  
And softly from the further room  
Comes : “ Now I lay me down to sleep.”

And, somehow, with that little prayer  
And that sweet treble in my ears,  
My thought goes back to distant years  
And lingers with a dear one there ;  
And as I hear the child’s amen,  
My mother’s faith comes back to me,  
Crouched at her side I seem to be,  
And mother holds my hands again.

Oh ! for an hour in that dear place !  
Oh ! for the peace of that dear time !  
Oh ! for that childish trust sublime !  
Oh ! for a glimpse of mother’s face !  
(188)

Yet, as the shadows round me creep,  
I do not seem to be alone—  
Sweet magic of that treble tone—  
And “Now I lay me down to sleep.”

## THE NEW ENGLAND PRIMER.

**A**LL the resources of literature seem to have been exhausted in the effort to discover the origin, and if possible the name of the author of the Children's Prayer, but it has hitherto been in vain. As a contribution to the history specially relating to it, the compiler gleans from a critical and elaborate history of the NEW ENGLAND PRIMER, and of earlier Primers in England, the following links in the chain of incident and interest, relative to the various editions published under the supervision of different revisers and critics from 1691 to the latest edition in use to the close of the first half of the present century.

"THE NEW ENGLAND PRIMER AND ITS PREDECESSORS," is the title of a series of articles by J. HAMMOND TURNBULL, LL.D., published in the *Sunday-School Times*, April 29 and May 6, 1882, and from which the following passages are collated :

"It is a small subject concerning which I am asked to write for the *Sunday-School Times* ; a very small subject  
(190)

—a subject which in fact is, or used to be, only about *three inches square*. Yet, small as are its dimensions, it is something that has for a century and a half at least, exerted no small influence in the creed, the morals, and the institutions of New England; for five or six generations it was an inmate of every Christian household, it was studied in every school, and its teachings, received in earliest childhood, remained as familiar truths when the failing memory of age had let go all else but the Bible. I am asked to write of the *New England Primer*, which used sometimes to be irreverently called the ‘*Little Bible of New England*.’ ”

The first published mention of the Primer now known was by an advertisement in the pages of an Almanac. In 1691, BENJAMIN HARRIS, a printer and bookseller in Boston, advertised as “in the press and suddenly to be extant, a second impression of the *New England Primer*, enlarged, to which is added more Directions for Spelling; the Prayer of King Edward the Sixth, and verses made by Mr. ROGERS, the martyr, left as a legacy to his children.” “No copy of this Primer is known to be extant.”

Having described several editions of the Primer, and

the changes made in them by the respective compilers and publishers, Dr. TURNBULL mentions among other similar lessons for children the following :

“ Have communion with few,  
Be intimate with ONE,  
Deal justly by all,  
Speak evil of none.”

Another of these short verses every child *did* learn from his mother, if not from his Primer—the prayer at lying down,—more familiar to English-speaking Protestants than any other—the LORD’S PRAYER only excepted. Lisped in infancy ; breathed with closed lips possibly in middle age ; reaching beyond and above all distinctions of creeds and differences of doctrines—its every syllable hallowed by early associations—that loving prayer has ascended to GOD from the hearts of “a great multitude which no man can number” :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

The first announcement of the *New England Primer* is contained in an advertisement on the title-page of an

Almanac, for the year 1691, issued by a Boston printer, and preserved in the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, which reads as follows :

A N

# ALMANACK

Containing an Account of the *Celestial Motions*, Aspects,  
&c. For the Year of the Christian  
Empire, 1691.

---

By HENRY NEWMAN, Philomath.

---

Printed by R. PIERCE for BENJAMIN HARRIS at the  
London Coffee House in Boston, 1691.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

There is now in the *Press*, and will suddenly be extant a Second Impression of the *New England Primer enlarged*, to which is added, *More Directions for Spelling* ; the *Prayer of K. Edward the 6th*, and *Verses made by Mr. Rogers the Martyr, left as a Legacy to his Children*.

Sold by BENJAMIN HARRIS, at the *London Coffee House in Boston*.

NOTE.—No copy of this edition is now known to be in existence.



The copy of the *New England Primer* bearing the earliest date now known, is in the Lenox Library, New York, published by S. KNEELAND and T. GREEN, 1727.

The Children's Prayer does *not* appear in this edition.

The copy bearing the next earliest date now known is in the library of a gentleman in New York City, and bearing the imprint of M. FLEET, Boston, 1738, and contains the Children's Prayer, as follows :

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

---

An edition published by S. ADAMS, Boston, about 1762, gives a change in the reading, in the first line, and the prayer reads as follows :

“ Now I lay me down to take my sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

I lay me down to take my sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

[Copy without title-page or date.]

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Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.

---

Now I lay down to take my sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

---

Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take,  
And this I ask for Jesus' sake.—Amen.

---

The name of the author of the Children's Prayer is unknown to earthly fame—but his work will bloom in the unclouded immortality of a world where “we shall know as we are known.”





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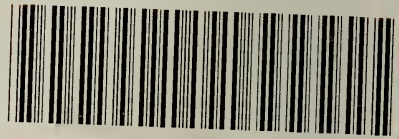
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